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I DEDICATE THESE LITTLE STORIES

TO

STORIES
FROM FAMOUS BALLADS.
FOR CHILDREN.

BY

GRACE GREENWOOD,
AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF MY PETS," "RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHILDHOOD,"
"MERRIE ENGLAND," "STORIES AND LEGENDS,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILLINGS.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
MDCCCLX.

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PRINTED BY
SAMUEL B. HOWARD.

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Patient Griselda.

STORIES FROM FAMOUS BALLADS.

PATIENT GRISELDA.

THE Marquis of Salusa, a great nobleman of Italy, one day set forth on a hunt, with a large party of gentlemen,—gallant young knights and courtiers. As the marquis was riding by himself, a little in advance of his company, along the borders of a great forest, he heard a sweet, womanly voice singing a gay ballad of love. Curious to see from whence came that voice, the marquis rode cautiously along till he came upon a simple little cottage, hidden, like a bird's nest, amid the thick, green foliage. Beside the door sat a beautiful young maiden, spinning and pouring out the gladness of an innocent heart in song. Her voice was so delicious that the linnets and thrushes in the trees around were

hushed in listening wonder. Only a knowing old sparrow, sitting on the low thatch of the cottage, eying the singer, with his head on one side, filled the pauses of her song with chirps of gracious applause; and an enthusiastic young robin, balancing himself on a slender spray, burst, every now and then, into a low gurgle of delight. It was a voice which seemed to belong to the young girl by right, it so expressed her beauty and sweetness. It was to her what perfume is to the rose.

This maiden was clad in a simple russet gown, the dress of a peasant. She wore no ornaments, and she needed none. Fairer than pearls were her lovely arms and neck, and more beautiful than a coronet of gold and jewels were the rich masses of sunny curls flowing to her waist, and softly shading her sweet face, as she sat and sang.

The marquis thought he had never beheld so lovely a creature. Though he knew many fair court ladies—proud dames of high degree—his heart had never been

touched by their haughty beauty and studied graces as by the simple loveliness of this poor peasant girl, — this wild rose of the forest. He sat very still in his saddle, gazing at her, — while she, all unconscious of his presence, sang on and whirled the swift wheel, thinking of anything else in the world but noble marquises, — till his company joined him. Then he advanced to the cottage door, and, taking off his plumed and jeweled hat, said, courteously, “ Good day, fair mistress of this homely bower, — this abode of virtue, love, and sweet content.”

The maiden was very much surprised, but not overcome. She had seen fine court gentlemen before, as they rode through the forest, chasing the deer. She rose, and, modestly greeting the marquis, welcomed him and his company to her father’s poor cottage, where she and her mother set before them some simple refreshments.

In those days short courtships were the fashion, especially where the suitor was a

noble lord, and his love a poor peasant girl. So it was hardly a matter of surprise to any present, except the cottagers, when the marquis turned from the brown bread and milk, which he had been making a brave effort to eat, and, taking the little white hand of the golden-haired maiden, said, "What is thy name, fair damsel?"

"Griselda," she replied, with a blush.

"Ah, well, Griselda, thou pleasest me; and I mean to make thee my wife."

But the maid, blushing yet more deeply, and trying to withdraw her hand, replied, "Nay, my lord marquis, that must not be; for I am a poor, ignorant peasant girl, too far below thy high estate to wed with thee. Surely thou dost jest."

Then the marquis swore a great oath — which I cannot think of repeating here — that he would marry her, and no other; and as he was very powerful indeed, and very self-willed and obstinate, — as lords are likely to be, — and as the maiden's father and mother were only too proud and happy

to give their consent, and as Griselda herself had, on beholding the handsome young huntsman, been seized with an instantaneous and overpowering affection for him, she consented, as we knew she would all along.

Then the gay young knights came forward and congratulated their lord, and begged leave to kiss the fair hand of his lady-love. They bowed low before Griselda, and pretended to be quite overwhelmed by her beauty and grace; but they laughed behind her back at her rustic air and russet gown — the rogues!

In a day or two there arrived for Griselda, from the marquis' palace, a great many parcels and band-boxes, containing splendid dresses and ornaments, accompanied by a smart waiting-woman, who put on such airs when she found herself in a cottage that Griselda thought her some great lady, and addressed her with profound respect, which did not tend to lesson her airs. She condescended, however, to

dress the bride in the silk, and velvet, and jewels her lord had sent to her ; to comb out her sunny locks, and confine them with a band of gold, set thick with diamonds.

The marquis came, with a company of noble lords and ladies, to conduct the bride to church. Griselda came forth from her chamber, looking more beautiful than words can tell, and greeted her lord with joyful smiles. Yet, as he led her forth, and set her on her snow-white palfrey, who tossed his mane and pawed the earth, as though proud of his trappings of crimson and gold, she did not glance back upon the humble cottage of her parents with haughty scorn, but with tears in her soft blue eyes.

She was married in a great church, with any amount of pomp and ceremony, two envious court ladies holding her train. And so the lowly born Griselda became Marchioness of Salusa.

When the marquis took his bride away to court, her father and mother returned proud and sad to their cottage, which had

become a very lonely and silent place. Everything seemed to miss Griselda ; the birds she had fed and sung to ; the flowers she had tended ; even the wild vine that clambered up the wall, and peeped in at the little window of her vacant chamber.

“How grand our Grisel looked, in silk and velvet ! She seemed made for such royal attire,” said the peasant mother to her good man, more than once, after that great wedding. Yet the first thing she had done, on their return from the church, was to take up the russet gown which the tiring-woman had contemptuously flung by, fold it carefully, and lay it away in a chest, with all the other articles of her daughter’s simple wardrobe. Then she knelt down and looked at them all, — russet gown, scarlet petticoat, snowy apron and hose, and little wooden shoes, — not with smiles of scorn, but with tears of tenderest love. You would have almost thought it was Griselda’s coffin she was looking into so mournfully.

At court, Griselda’s beauty so far out-

shone that of the dames of high degree that they were all filled with envy and ill will. Soon they endeavored to make strife and unhappiness between her and her lord, — dispraising her for her lowly birth and simple, innocent ways, even while praising her beauty, and pretending to admire her healthy, country bloom. They said very bitter, disagreeable things, with the sweetest voices and softest smiles ; affected to pity the marquis for his infatuation, and to believe that he already repented his unlucky choice of a wife.

The Salusas were a very proud and aristocratic family, wonderfully ancient and exclusive. They could trace back their splendid line for ever so many centuries, — some said, playfully, to the creation ; and that they laid claim to a separate Eden, and an Adam and Eve of their own. So it was little wonder that the marquis' kinswomen were all especially indignant and scornful ; and being such

mighty personages, they did not scruple to speak out plain and strong.

“Thou hast wronged us, cousin,” they said. “Thou, a noble marquis, a Salusa, to wed with one so basely born. Thou shouldst have taken a princess for thy wife. Put away this mean peasant girl, who brings upon thee and thy race only scorn and reproach, and take another bride, — a lady of rank equal to thine own.”

All these things were reported to Griselda; but she bore them with sweet patience and unfailing humility, saying that her dear lord must do as seemed to him best — hold to her, or put her away; that she grieved to have offended the noble lords and ladies by her lowly birth; but that that was a thing she could not undo, else would she gladly right it. And yet it seemed to her, she said, that her lord's high estate should make her humbleness to be forgotten; as when the lark soars singing in

mid-heaven, none think of his mate, low-nested in the meadow-grass.

Well, those gay lords and proud ladies grew more and more interested in their game of hunting down poor Griselda, and worrying her noble husband ; till at last, the marquis secretly laid a plan for mortifying them, and proving his wife's patience and constant love. This plan has been greatly admired and commended, especially by poets ; but I cannot say that I approve of it at all. From beginning to end I think it was most unkind and ungenerous. I must confess, too, that I cannot altogether admire Griselda's wonderful "patience." In my opinion she had altogether too much of a good thing. But to my story.

Griselda was now the mother of two pretty twin babies. At the christening of these there was great rejoicing among the retainers of the marquis. A great company of knights and ladies were entertained at his palace with feasts and tour-

neys, and all sorts of pleasant games, for full six weeks.

Griselda mingled as little as possible in these sports. She loved better to stay in the nursery, beside the cradle of her babies, where she was happier than she had ever been since she became a great lady. One day, after all the guests were gone, she was sitting by the children, watching them in their sleep, and wishing, perhaps, that her own dear mother were there to look with her on their pretty little rosy faces and chubby, dimpled hands, when a rude servitor entered, and told her that his lord had sent him to remove the babies forever out of the way ; as, on their mother's side, they were too base-born to inherit the riches and titles of the noble house of Salusa. "So let me have the children, without delay," he said, stretching out his hands towards the cradle.

Poor Griselda burst into tears and sobs, and wrung her hands wildly, for a few moments. But she soon calmed herself, stayed

her sobs, dropped her hands upon her knees, and said, meekly, "My gracious lord must have his will obeyed."

Then she took her little son and daughter from their cradle, kissed them many times, with tears and blessings and sorrowful farewells, and gave them to her lord's messenger, saying, "Alas ! alas ! had I been of royal race, I might have kept my dear babies ; now they must die for my unworthiness. Take them, messenger of death though thou be, and commend me to my lord."

The servitor took the children to his master, who secretly sent them to a noble lady, to be brought up tenderly, as became their rank.

After he had done this, he went to seek his wife. He found her sitting in the nursery all alone, beside the empty cradle, very white and still, with her hands tightly clasped on her bosom. She tried to smile when her lord drew near, and though she could not quite do it, she looked very sweet and patient as usual.

“Well,” he said, “thy children are now disposed of; safe from the scorn of the great world. What dost thou think of this deed? Answer me, my pretty Griselda.”

She replied, “If thou, my lord, art well pleased with it, poor Griselda can say naught against it. Both I and mine are at thy command.”

A few days after this, the marquis came to his wife’s chamber, apparently very much disturbed in his mind.

“My fair Griselda,” he said, rather bluntly, “matters have come to such a pass here at court,—my nobles and their wives so murmur and rail at the great honor I have done thee,—that I can have no peace till thou art banished. I am sorry, but I really cannot hold out any longer. I have made up my mind to send thee home, and let thee return to the lowly fortune to which thou wert born. Thou must take off thy stately garments, which ill befit thee now, and put on again the

russet gown thou didst wear when I saw thee first. I have had it brought hither, with the rest of thy peasant garb. I would be willing to grant thee a pension from my purse, but for the exceeding bitter outcry against thee. My kinsfolk will not allow me to give thee a groat. It is a grievous case, but so it must be."

Griselda heard these cruel words quietly, and submitted without a murmur or complaint. She rose up meekly, stripped off her laces and her jewels, her robe of velvet and her kirtle of silk, and put on her russet gown. When she was dressed in the old humble way, though her insolent waiting-woman laughed, she was not ashamed, only sorely grieved. As she was ready to depart from her splendid palace-home she thought only of the beloved though cruel husband she must be separated from forever; and looking up into his face with tearful eyes she said, softly, "God send long life to thee, my dear lord."

The marquis' own eyes looked a little

watery at these words. He bent down and kissed her, saying, "Farewell, my dear."

And so the Marquis of Salusa put away his wife ; and she, all clad in russet gray, went back to the little cottage by the great forest, and said, "My father and mother, I have come back to you and the lowly estate to which I was born. My noble lord has wearied of me."

Griselda continued to live with her parents some years. She was still very beautiful, though not so blooming and gay as in her humble, happy girlhood. She never sang now, and secretly she wept much for her lost children and the husband who had forsaken her. But she was gentle and good, and as "patient" as ever. No one could speak evil of her. At court she was soon forgotten ; and at last there were rumors that the Marquis of Salusa was about to make a new marriage, — one worthy of his exalted rank and ancient family. The first that Griselda knew of it she was summoned by the marquis to

his palace, to attend the wedding and wait on the fair bride.

“Do not go, my Grisel,” said her mother. “Thou owest that wicked man no duty, now that he has put thee away. Go not, I pray thee.”

“Nay, mother,” she replied, “I owe my dear lord duty while I live ; and I will go, if only to look on his face once more, and for the last time ere I die.”

So she went to the palace with her brother,—she looking very meek and patient, as usual ; he with a fiery glow in his swarthy cheeks, and an angry flash in his eyes ; for he loved his fair sister, and fiercely resented her wrongs.

The new bride of the marquis was very unlike the old ; a proud and haughty dame was she, and crafty withal. She had wished and schemed to marry the marquis before he had wedded Griselda, and afterwards had been the poor wife’s bitterest enemy.

Ah ! it was a sore trial of Griselda’s

patience, when she was charged with the task of attiring this proud dame for the altar. Yet she did as she was commanded, — meekly bore the lady's scoffs and gibes, and tried hard to make her look beautiful in her costly bridal array.

When all was done, and the marquis had entered, with all his lords and gentlemen, she was about to shrink away, feeling that she really could endure no more, and that she must get home to her mother, or die at once, when the marquis stepped up to her and said, “Now, Mistress Griselda, I would know if thou agreest to this marriage. I have chosen, at last, a right noble and stately bride, of ancient family, and exceeding rich withal. What sayest thou? Methinks thy looks are wondrous coy. Art well content?”

With this, all around began to laugh at the poor woman's distress. But she looked up in her old, patient, loving way; and though her lip quivered, and her eyelashes glistened with tears, she said, firmly,

“God send my lord marquis many years of joy!”

At that meek answer, all present, except only the proud dame who was to be the bride, were moved with pity and admiration. More than one great lord, with an immense pedigree, and a brilliant string of titles streaming after his name, like the tail of a comet, became conscious, for the first time for many years, that he had such a thing as a heart, by its suddenly softening and warming toward that marvelously loving and long-suffering wife. More than one haughty lady, amazed at such goodness and gentleness, forgot or forgave poor Griselda's surpassing beauty, and cried, “Gramercy! she is an angel, and no mortal woman.”

But most of all was the marquis moved by her humble words, her uncomplaining sweetness; by all the mournful tenderness and patient suffering which spoke in her tones and looked out of her eyes. He took her by the hand, and said, in a loud, clear

voice, “*Thou art my bride,—all the bride I want, or mean to have.*” Then, pointing to a noble boy and a beautiful young girl, standing somewhat apart and gazing wistfully upon her, he added, “There are thy children!” and in another moment, Griselda was warmly embraced by her long lost son and daughter.

The marquis then asked pardon of the disappointed bride,—who, after all, was no bride,—and begged her still to retain, as some slight consolation for the loss of his rank and fortune, the costly jewels he had that morning presented to her. She refused to grant the pardon, but she kept the jewels.

Then, again taking the hand of his wife, the marquis made a little speech to the lords and ladies present, which considerably lowered their lofty crests.

“You who once envied and despised my dear and loving wife,” he said, “may now blush for shame, and learn to honor virtue and goodness. I tell you, that long

after the proudest of you is forgotten, fame shall extol the patient constancy of Griselda, whom I again take to my arms, — my most noble and beloved wife.”

Now, if I had been Griselda, I am almost sure I should have drawn back at this, and said, “Pardon, my lord marquis, but this must not be. Thou didst never truly love me, if, having no reason to doubt my constant affection, thou couldst, for a mere whim, so cruelly rend my heart, and so severely try my patience, through these long years. I cannot be again thy wife. Give me my children, and let us part in peace.”

But then I should have spoiled more than one quaint old ballad and charming romance, and robbed the husbands of many generations of a valuable example to hold up before their wives. So, on the whole, I suppose it is as well that I was not in “Patient Griselda’s” place.

THE KING OF FRANCE'S DAUGHTER.

A LONG time ago, there ruled in France a famous monarch, called "Charles the Bald," who had a fair daughter named Judith, the only child of his dead queen. She was a very sweet young princess; graceful and beautiful, as only a princess in a ballad or a fairy story can be. The king doted on her with all his heart, was proud of her beauty and accomplishments, and resolved to wed her to some rich and powerful prince. But, unfortunately for his ambitious plans, there came to his court a young prince of England, named Ethelwulph, brave and renowned, but, because of a revolution in his native land, an exile, poor and powerless. He was handsome and amiable, and, falling in love with the princess of France, had little difficulty in winning her love in return. This,

was not at all pleasing to the king, her father; indeed was so displeasing that he frowned on his young guest in awful indignation and reproach. This made Ethelwulph's residence at court very uncomfortable, as all the courtiers — who copied after their liege lord so servilely that to the youngest they shaved their crowns, in imitation of the royal baldness — frowned with double blackness on the unlucky stranger; and all the fair ladies of the court, except the princess, looked most ungracious, or coolly turned their backs upon him.

The king reproved his daughter sternly, and commanded her to think no more of that penniless and proscribed young Englishman. A great king was Charles, but his power did not reach quite so far as that; Judith thought of her lover more than ever, pitied him, and resolved to cling to him all the more for his misfortunes.

At length her father began to treat her

severely, and wished to marry her to a gray-headed old royal suitor, whom she detested ; and, getting very desperate, she agreed to escape from court with her lover, to some safe refuge, where they could wed and live in peace. So she disguised herself in humble attire, and, taking only, of all her royal goods, a casket of jewels and gold, stole forth, one summer night, from her father's stately palace, away to the great hunting forest, on the borders of which her English lover had promised to meet her.

The young prince reached the spot agreed upon for the meeting before his fair lady, and sat down under an oak tree, to wait her coming. But most unluckily, as he waited there, all fond impatience, he was attacked by outlaws, robbed, and mortally wounded by dagger-strokes.

The princess came to the wood, yet could not for a long time find the spot where he lay, but wandered about, listening for his voice, and calling him softly, for fear of

being overheard by robbers, or some of the king's foresters. At length she was startled by hearing piteous sobs and groans, and then a mournful voice, saying, "Farewell, my beloved, whom I must never more see! My days are at an end, and for thy love I die. While I lie here, bleeding all my brave young life away, I think only of my beautiful lady, and I am not sorry that I loved her. Ah, little knows she that my heart's blood is flowing on the ground!"

At these words, the princess, struck with a sad foreboding, rushed forward to the side of the dying man. The robbers had dragged him out from under the oak tree's shadow into an open glade, where the full moon shone down on his ghastly face. It was, indeed, her beloved prince. She flung herself down by him, raised his head on her knee, and called him by his name very tenderly and sorrowfully. Alas! he could not answer her. Once he looked at

her; then, with a low, sad sigh, his life fled away forever.

For a long time the princess would not believe Prince Ethelwulph dead, but continued to call on his name more and more wildly, striving to rouse him from his deep swoon, and to staunch his bleeding wounds. At last she resigned all hope, and, lying down by his side, with his cold hand pressed close to her heart, she wept bitterly till morning. Then she rose up and looked about her, wearily and desolately. "Alas!" she murmured, "what will become of me? I cannot bear to return to the court of my father;—my father, who scorned *him*,—my gracious and right royal love; the princeliest man under the sun, —and drove him forth to die in this savage wood! Rather will I seek a servant's lowly place, in some stranger's family, and, all unknown, live out my few sad days,—my woful, widowed days." Then she fell to weeping again very drearily, and calling on the name of her dead love.

It happened that a forester — a very brave and comely youth — was that morning ranging the wood, and came suddenly upon the maiden. Seeing that he looked gentle and full of pity, she told him a part of her sorrowful story, and shewed him her dead lover, but did not reveal his rank or her own. Her distress moved him to tears. He comforted her all he could ; he took up the body of the prince, and bore it tenderly to his cottage, where he washed its wounds, composed its limbs, and laid it to rest in the flowery earth, under an old forest-tree.

Then, as the princess had spoken to him of wishing to go to service, he placed her with his mother, who was very kind to her, and soon grew to love her very dearly. And not alone did that good old dame love the fair and sorrowful stranger, but all her household ; and most of all, the handsome young forester. He had never beheld a maiden of such refined beauty, such grace, and such gentle manners ; and he thought

it would be the happiest thing in the world if he could win her for his wife.

It was a long time before the princess would consent to marry him. Her love and her joy seemed all buried with her murdered prince. But the forester was so kind and generous, and she was so grateful to him, and honored him so sincerely, that she finally granted him her hand ; and he proved so good a husband that at last she grew very happy and contented, and almost forgot the lofty rank to which she was born, and the bitter sorrow of her girlhood.

It was not till after years had gone by, and she was the mother of seven children, that the Princess Judith revealed the secret of her royal birth to her husband. He was greatly astonished ; and, though he did not love his beautiful wife any better than before, he wondered that she could have ever loved him and married him,—a man of low degree. He besought her to allow him to proclaim her rank to the world ; and from that time he clothed his children in

a very curious manner. He had made for them parti-colored garments, — the right side of cloth of gold, the left of gray frieze, as emblematical of the rank of the mother and of the father. When he next heard that the king was coming to chase the deer in the forest, he persuaded Judith to place herself and her children near a path along which his majesty must ride.

The princess was dressed in robes of crimson velvet, and wore the royal jewels she had secretly treasured through all these years. Her husband stood beside her, dressed all in sober gray, but a right gallant figure to behold; and the seven beautiful children, in their parti-colored dress, — half cloth of gold, half gray frieze, like sunshine and shadow, — were grouped around their parents.

Judith started and turned pale when she heard the horn of the hunters, and the dull sound of their horses' hoofs on the grassy forest paths. Her heart yearned lovingly toward her father, as it had often

done since she had been a mother ; but she feared to meet him face to face, — feared that he would reproach and disown her ; or, what would be far worse, treat with lofty scorn her good and noble husband.

At length the monarch came in sight, followed by a long cavalcade of knights and gentlemen. Judith looked at him eagerly. He did not seem greatly changed ; he had grown a little stouter and ruddier, a little more bald, and his face seemed somewhat softened, as by sorrow and regret.

Charles was a keen-eyed monarch, who saw everything in his way ; so that singular group by the roadside did not escape his notice. He checked his horse, and looked at them curiously for a few moments ; then, calling the forester to him, asked how he dared to dress his wife in such a royal way, and to put cloth of gold on his children.

“Because, sire,” replied the forester, “she hath, by birth, as well as by sovereign beauty, the right to be so arrayed ;

and the children, through her, are entitled to cloth of gold and pearls ; she being a princess — the highest in the land.”

On hearing this reply, the king looked more earnestly at Judith, and his stern face lighted up with a great joy, as he said to the forester, “The more I look at thy wife, the more it seems to me that she is my long lost daughter, whom I have mourned as dead.”

At these words the princess sprang forward, and, kneeling before him, cried, “*I am* thy daughter, — once thy little Judith. Pardon me, my dear father and sovereign liege !”

The king at once dismounted and raised her in his arms, kissed her, and wept over her. Then he embraced her husband, and kissed and blessed her children — all seven of them — right tenderly and joyfully.

After this glad meeting, the king gave up hunting for the day ; and, turning about with all his train, went home with the forester and his family. There, in that rustic

cottage, which, though not very small, quite overflowed with all that gay retinue, Charles the Bald—no longer the proud and ambitious monarch who frowned on poor Ethelwulph, and so cruelly treated his only daughter—dubbed the lowly-born forester knight, and made him Earl of Flanders, and chief of all the royal forces.

Soon after this time, the earl and the princess went to live in a royal castle, and had hosts of servitors; and, though they saw less of each other than formerly, they saw a great deal of good company, to make up for it. Their seven children no longer wore parti-colored clothes, but dressed in velvet and cloth of gold every day, and had tutors and governesses, and were taught to behave like fine ladies and gentlemen.

But I doubt if they were, any of them, happier than in the old days, before the princess revealed that she was a princess, and when the children ran free about the forester's cottage, and grew strong and

beautiful in the breezy old wood ; when they gathered wild flowers, waded in the brook, and tumbled in the grass, without fear of soiling their clothes, — their gray peasant gowns, jerkins, and hose, — and without fear of tiresome reproofs for their merry frolics and joyous laughter. But people can't be great princes and princesses without paying for their grandeur, in quiet ease, healthy sport, and careless happiness.

CHEVY CHACE.

It was in the reign of Henry the Sixth, of England, and of James the First, of Scotland, that the hot-headed Percy, Earl of Northumberland, made a vow, and swore a great oath, that he would hunt for three good days among the Cheviot Hills, in spite of his Scottish foe—the brave and mighty Earl Douglas—and all his clan. He declared that he would kill the fattest harts in all the forest, and carry them away to feast upon in his grand castle. When the bold Douglas heard this, he laughed, in a grim, mocking way, and sent the Percy word to look for *him*, also, at that merry hunting.

Lord Percy came out of Bamboro, with a company of fifteen hundred archers, and began the chase among the beautiful Cheviot Hills, early on a Monday morning, in

the golden autumn time. Fast and far they rode through the forest, following their eager hounds, which pressed close upon the flying deer. Now they galloped up hills; now they floundered through marshy places; now they leaped fallen trees; now they tore through thick brush-wood; now they dashed through quiet streams, breaking down flowering shrubs, crushing small wild-wood flowers, startling little song-birds from their nests, shaking down showers of many-colored leaves, chasing down the panting hart, and bathing their swift arrows in his gushing blood; so carrying noise, and tumult, and terror, and death wherever they went.

By noon they had killed a hundred fat deer. Then they blew a loud bugle-call, and all came together to see the quartering of the game. Then the proud Lord Percy said, "The doughty Douglas promised to meet us here, to-day; but I knew full well the braggart Scot would fail to keep his word."

Just then, one of his squires called his attention to a sight which quickly changed his opinion of the Scottish chief.

Down below, in Tiviotdale, along the borders of the Tweed, came a host of full two thousand men, armed with bows and spears, bills and brands. As soon as they came near to the hunters, they cried out, "Leave off quartering the deer, and look to your bows; for never, since you were born, have you had greater need of them than now."

The Douglas rode in front of his men, his white plumes dancing in the wind, and his brazen armor flashing in the mid-day sun; and when he spoke his voice was like a trumpet, — so clear, and strong, and threatening.

"Ho, there!" he cried; "what men, or whose men are you? And who gave you leave to hunt in Cheviot, in spite of me?"

Then Lord Percy, with a black frown, and a voice like thunder, answered, "We

will not tell thee what men, nor whose men we are ; but we *will* hunt here, in this chace, in spite of thee and all thy clan. We have killed the fattest harts in all these forests, and we intend to take them home and make merry with them."

"By my troth !" answered the Douglas, "for that boasting speech, one or the other of us must die this day ! But, my Lord Percy, it were a great pity to kill all these guiltless men, in our quarrel. We are both nobles of high degree, and well matched ; so let our men stand aside, while we two fight it out."

The Percy agreed to this ; but neither his nor the Douglas' men would consent to stand still while their lords were fighting.

So the English archers bent their bows, and let fly a perfect shower of arrows, and the Scottish spearmen charged upon them. Then the English and Scots both drew their swords, and fought face to face, and foot to foot. And so began one of the most terrible fights that the sun ever looked upon.

Soon the Douglas and the Percy came together, and fought till the blood spurted through their armor, and sprinkled all the ground around them in a thick, red rain.

At last, the Douglas cried, "Yield, Percy, and I will take thee to our Scottish king, and thou shalt be nobly treated, and have thy ransom free; for thou art the bravest man that I ever conquered in all my fighting!"

"No!" replied the proud earl; "I have told thee before, and I tell thee again, I will never yield to any man living; so lay on!"

Just then an arrow, sent by a stout English archer, came singing sharply through the air, and pierced deep into the breast of the Douglas. He gave one cry,— "Fight on, my merry men, while you may; for all my days are over!" and then straightened himself out and died.

Lord Percy took the dead man's hand, and said, "Wo's me! to have saved thy life I would have parted with my lands;

for in all the country there was not a braver or better man ! ”

As he stood there lamenting, a Scottish knight, called Sir Hugh Montgomery, came galloping up on a swift steed, and drove his spear clean through Lord Percy, so that he never spoke more. Then an archer of Northumberland took aim at Sir Hugh, with an arrow tipped with a white swan's plume, and the next moment the knight fell from his saddle ; and the plume on the arrow that stuck in his breast was no longer white, but red.

And so they went on till evening, and still the battle was not done. Then they fought by the moonlight, until the night winds sighed about them, and the skies wept still tears of dew, and the fearful little stars glinted down upon them through the moaning trees.

In the morning, it was found that of the fifteen hundred archers of England, there were living but fifty-three ; and of the two thousand spearmen of Scotland but fifty-

five, and these were so weary and wounded that they gave up the fight.

But there were seen many yet sadder sights on Cheviot battle-field, when the widows and orphans, the fathers and mothers, and sisters and young brothers, came to search for their dead. They looked eagerly here and there; and when they found the beloved forms, still and cold, and ghastly with red death-wounds, there was weeping and bitter mourning; and many a cry of despairing agony rung out on the dewy morning air.

At length, homeward turned the mourners, bearing their dead on rude biers, made of birch and hazel branches. As they passed slowly through the shadowy wood, the wind blowing through the old oaks and mournful pines above them made a sad and solemn music; and the young trees murmured and trembled at their steps, and flung down pitying dew-drops upon the dead. The birds ceased their singing till the procession passed by; and

now and then a wild doe looked out through the thick branches, and seemed, with her soft, melancholy eyes, to sorrow rather than rejoice over the brave hunters, who would level the lance and direct the arrow no more.

When it was told to the Scottish King James, at Edinburgh, that the noble Douglas had been slain at Cheviot, he cried, "Alas, woe is me! for there is not and never will be such another captain in all Scotland."

But when word was carried to King Henry, at London, that Lord Percy had been killed at Cheviot, he said, "May God have mercy on his soul! I have a hundred captains in England as good as ever he was; nevertheless, I pledge my life to avenge thy death, my gallant Percy!"

To fulfil this angry vow, he went to battle against the Scottish king, and made the lives of six-and-thirty of his bravest knights, and many hundred gentlemen and soldiers, pay for the life of the Percy.

Soon, the Scots avenged themselves ; then, the English ; till it seemed that there would be no end to the fighting, and bloodshed, and sorrow that came from that hunt in the Cheviot Hills, most often called “Chevy Chace.” For century after century, the descendants of the men who fought there were at deadly strife ; and few, I fear, were as noble foes as the great Douglas and Lord Percy. At last, they forgot that the first cause of the quarrel was a dispute about the right to kill a few deer, between two chieftains who were reconciled in death, and they went on hating, and robbing, and killing one another ; fighting, all the while, in the darkness of ignorance, and superstition, and fierce, wicked passions. But after a while, God sent a better day to England and Scotland, — a day of knowledge and true religion ; and by its light these men saw that they were brothers, — flung down their swords, clasped hands, and were at peace forever.

THE KING AND THE MILLER OF MANSFIELD.

ONCE upon a time, the young King Henry the Second, of England, was chasing the deer in his forest of Sherwood,—a sport of which he was exceedingly fond. All day long he rode with his princes and nobles; but being mounted on the swiftest horse, and being the most gallant and determined huntsman, he at length outrode them all, and found himself, at twilight, quite alone, and lost in the mazes of the wood. In vain he wound his horn, shouted, and halloed. There came to his ear no answering sound of bugle, or voice, or galloping horses, or baying hounds.

In this strait, the king felt no longer the ardor of the chase; but he did feel weariness and hunger, and longed for a shelter, supper, and a bed, however rude. He wandered up and down for a while, all bewil-

dered, and not a little troubled, lest he should fall a prey to the outlaws who infested those dense forest shades. But at length, quite by accident, he struck upon a path which led him out into the open country, and on to a public road. Here he happened to meet a man whom, by his whitened dress, he knew to be a miller, and whom he courteously accosted, asking the nearest way to Nottingham, where, at that time, he was holding his court. The miller looked up at him very suspiciously, and answered, "Sir, I intend no saucy jest; but I think what I think, and that is, that thou dost not come so far out of thy way for nothing."

"Why, man," said the king, pleasantly, "what dost thou take me for, that thou passest such sudden judgment upon me?"

"Good faith, sir!" replied the miller; "and to speak plain, I think thou art some gentleman-thief of the forest. So stand back there in the dark. Don't dis-

mount, lest I crack thy knavish crown with my cudgel ! ”

“Nay, friend, thou dost do me great wrong,” answered the king. “I am an honest gentleman. I have lost my way, and I want supper and lodging for the night.”

“I do not believe that thou hast one groat in thy purse, for all thy gay clothes,” said the miller. “Thou dost carry all thy silver on thy outside, like a pheasant.”

“Wrong, again. I have money enough to pay for all I call for.”

“Well, if thou art truly an honest man, and canst pay for it, I will gladly give thee lodging and food.”

“I have always been accounted such a man,” said the king. “Here ’s my hand on ’t.”

“Not so fast,” said the miller ; “I must know thee better, ere we shake hands. Thou mayst be a hobgoblin for all I know.” With that, the good man led the way to

his house, which he entered, his guest dismounting and following him.

When they stood in the full firelight, —
“Now, sir, let me see what thou art like,”
said the miller.

“Look thy fill. Do not spare my modesty,” replied the merry monarch.

“Well,” said the miller, after a close and curious inspection, “on the whole, I like thy face; it is an honest one. Thou mayst stay with us till the morning.”

The miller’s buxom wife, who was busy cooking a supper; the savory steam of which was filling all the cottage, here paused from her work, to put in a word, —
“Ay, by my troth, husband, he is a comely youth; yet it is best to have a care. Art thou no runaway servitor, my pretty lad? Show us thy passport, and it please thee; so all shall be well.”

The young king, taking off his hat, and bowing low, replied, “I have no passport, my fair mistress; and I was never a servitor. I am but a poor huntsman, belong-

ing to the court, who has been parted from his fellows and lost his way. I am too wearied to ride to Nottingham to-night, so crave your kind hospitality."

The good woman was so well pleased with these words that she whispered to her husband,—"It seems this youth is of respectable family. Both his dress and his manners prove it; and it were a sin to turn him out of doors."

"Ay, good wife," said the miller, "he shows he has had some breeding, by the respectful way he has of speaking to his betters. A decent lad, I doubt not."

"Well, young man," said the dame, turning to her guest, "thou art welcome; and, though I say it, thou shalt be well lodged, in my house. I will give thee a bed of fresh straw, and good brown hempen sheets, span clean; and thou shalt sleep like a prince."

"Ay, sir," put in the miller; "and thou shalt have no worse a bed-fellow than our son Richard."

The king made a wry face, at the idea of sharing his bed with a stranger; but Master Richard—a boorish, bushy-headed, but jolly-looking youth, who sat in the chimney corner, watching the pot boil—called out, bluntly, “Nay, father, I have a word to say to that. First, my good fellow, tell me truly, art thou right cleanly and wholesome?”

The king burst into a hearty laugh, as he answered, “Ay, friend; I’ll answer for it, thou’lt have no cause to complain of me on that score.”

Soon after this, they all sat down to supper, which consisted of hot bag-puddings, apple-pies, and good, foamy ale, which last was passed from one to another in a large brown bowl. The miller drank first, to his guest’s good health; and the merry king did not disdain to take the bowl in turn, and drink to his host and hostess, with thanks for their good cheer; “And also,” he added, with a courtly bow toward Rich-

ard, "permit me to drink to your gallant son."

"Then do it quickly," said Dick, "and pass the bowl; for I am dry."

"Now, wife," said the miller, "let us have a taste of 'lightfoot.'" At this, the good woman brought from her pantry a venison pastry, and set it before her husband. He helped his guest to a portion, saying, "Eat, sir, but make no waste. It's a dainty dish."

"Ay, by my faith! I find it the daintiest dish that ever I tasted," said the king, who was hungry enough to relish much worse fare.

"By *my* faith! it is no dainty at all," said Richard, "seeing that we eat it every day."

"In what place may the meat you call 'lightfoot' be bought?" asked the king.

"Why, as for that," answered Dick, "we don't buy it at all. We fetch it on our backs from the forest yonder. To say truth, we now and then make free with the

king's deer, seeing that he hath more of a good thing than he needs, or deserves."

"So, then, this is venison?" said the king.

"Ay,—any fool may know that. We are never without two or three, up there under the roof,—excellent fat bucks. But mind thou tell no tales, when thou leavest us. We would not for two-pence that the king should know of it; he might be villain enough to hang us."

"Don't be uneasy, my friend," said royal Henry. "He shall never know any more of it through me, I promise thee." After this, they took a hearty draught of ale all around, and went to bed.

The king slept soundly all night, on his rude couch of straw, being too tired to be kept awake even by the lusty snoring of his bed-fellow, Richard.

In the morning, after a hearty breakfast,—for which, as for his supper and lodging, he paid handsomely in gold,—as the king was about mounting his horse to

depart for Nottingham, a large party of his nobles, who had been hunting for him, in all directions, for many hours, galloped up to the miller's cottage ; and, seeing their sovereign, dismounted instantly, and knelt before him, craving his pardon for having lost sight of him in the chase, the day previous.

When the miller perceived the lofty rank of his guest, and remembered how familiarly he had treated him, he stood speechless with terror, trembling from head to foot, expecting nothing less than that he should be hanged before his own door. The king saw his fright, and was secretly amused, but said nothing. Presently, he drew his sword slowly from its scabbard. At this, the poor miller dropped on his knees, and begged for his life, with big tears rolling down his cheeks. Just behind him knelt his wife, crying piteously. As for Master Richard, he had valiantly turned and run for Sherwood Forest, as soon as he found who had been his bed-fellow.

The king lifted his sword. “Don’t cut off my head, your majesty! It won’t do anybody else as much good as it does me!” cried the miller.

The king brought down his sword, — not on the miller’s neck, but lightly on his shoulder, — and said, “Rise, Sir John Cockle!”

When King Henry had returned from Nottingham, to his palace, at Westminster, he was one day talking over with his nobles the sports and pastimes of the season; and he then declared that of all the adventures he had ever had, his getting lost in the forest of Sherwood, and his entertainment by the Miller of Mansfield, had afforded him the most amusement.

“A thought strikes me!” he exclaimed. “The great feast of St. George is approaching. We will invite our new knight, his wife, and his son Richard, to be our guests on that occasion. How say you, my lords; does not the plan promise sport?”

The proposal was received by merry acclamations and laughter, by the nobles; and an officer (called a pursuivant) was dispatched on the business at once.

When the king's messenger entered the miller's house, he addressed the simple old countryman with the most profound respect, saying, "God save your worship, and your worship's fair lady, and send to your worship's son Richard—that sweet, gentle, and gallant young squire—good fortune and happiness! Our king sends you courteous greeting, and begs that you will all three come to court, on St. George's day."

"I doubt," said the miller, "this is a jest of his majesty. What should we do at court? Faith, I'm afraid of such jests."

"As for me," said Richard, ruefully, "I look to be hanged, at the very least."

"Nay, upon my word," answered the pursuivant, "you mistake. The king is to make a great feast, in your honor. So do not fail to come."

“If that is the case, sir messenger,” said the miller, pompously, “thou hast pleased my worship right well. So here are three farthings for thy good tidings. Let me see ;—ah, commend my worship to the king, and say that we will wait upon him, with right good will, on St. George’s day, with the other nobles of the realm.”

The pursuivant, refraining with difficulty from smiling at such simplicity, took the reward, and bowed himself out of the cottage, in the most humble and respectful manner. He returned to Westminster, in a merry mood, and showed his three farthings to the young king, who laughed heartily at the knight’s liberal bounty.

When the messenger was gone, the miller said to his wife,—“Here’s a pretty pass ! There’ll be no end of the expenses we shall be put to for fine clothes, horses, and serving men, saddles and bridles. A plague on court feasts ! This one will ruin us.”

“Tush, Sir John !” said the dame (she always addressed her husband by his new title ; and she used it a great deal, to get the hang of it) : — “tush, Sir John ! Folk cannot consort with kings, and spend naught, Sir John. But thou knowest I am a thrifty dame, and thou shalt be at no expense for me, I promise thee, Sir John. I will turn and trim up my old russet gown, and make it as good as new. Then, Sir John, we can ride on our good mill-horses, — I on a pillion behind thee, and Dick by himself, as becomes a gallant young squire.”

The miller — who had always, even since he was made a great man, done pretty much as his good wife advised — consented to this. And so they set forth ; — jolly Master Richard, in a new leathern jerkin, with a brave cock’s feather in his cap, riding proudly in front of his parents, who, on one stout mill-horse, jogged leisurely along.

The king and his nobles, being apprised of the approach to the palace of their rus-

tic guests, went out to meet them, in great state.

“Welcome, sir knight!” said the merry monarch; “welcome to court, with thy gay lady, and that brave squire, thy son.”

“Out on thee!” said Dick, sheepishly. “Thou dost not know me.”

“Surely, I do,” replied the king, smiling. “Thou didst sleep in the same bed with me, once upon a time.”

“Ay, sir, I mind it well,” said Dick; “and a most uncomfortable bed-fellow thou wast,—taking a royal share of the straw. Save me from such grand bed-fellows, say I!”

“Speak civilly to my friend, the king, thou unmannerly knave, or, by my knight-hood, thou shalt rue it!” cried Sir John, in wrath.

But the king only laughed good-humor-edly, and conducted his guests into the great hall of his palace. Here, giving a hand to the miller and his wife, he presented them to the stately court ladies,

princesses, and duchesses, who were all, in their turn, extremely polite. Dame Cockle, who would not be outdone in good manners, dropped a funny little curtesy at every word, and smiled graciously upon all around her.

At length they all sat down to the feast, — a sumptuous banquet of richly-cooked viands and costly dainties, served with great ceremony, in vessels of silver and gold. When they had eaten heartily, the king drank to the health of Sir John Cockle, in a cup of malmsey wine, and again thanked him for his hospitality.

“Now I think of the thing,” he added, with a sly smile, “I would that we had here some of thy ‘lightfoot’ pastry, Sir John.”

“Ho, there !” cried Richard ; “I make bold to say it is knavery, after having eaten of it, to betray us.”

“Why, friend, art thou angry ?” asked the king. “That is unkind ; I thought thou wouldst take the joke, and pledge

thy bed-fellow heartily in wine, or good Nottinghamshire ale."

"Wait, then, till I have dined," said Dick. "Thou dost feed us with so many little fiddling dishes, that a man is never filled. One black pudding were worth them all."

"Ay, Master Richard, that were a rare good thing, could a man but have one here," replied the king.

At this, Dick rose and pulled an enormous one out of his wallet, — a portion of the refreshment provided for his journey. The king, pretending great eagerness, attempted to snatch it; but Dick drew it back, saying, "Hold, my good sir! Keep to thy court dainties; this is meet for thy master."

Even this saucy speech, as the king took it merrily, was followed by roars of laughter; and the fun and frolic continued to the end of the banquet, and for a long time after. For, as soon as they rose from the table, king, courtiers, and

gay ladies, prepared to dance. Henry selected partners for Sir John and Master Richard, and himself danced with Dame Cockle. Such sport as those rustics made for them, — with their awkward blunders, and their wild rollicking ways, — those great lords and ladies had never known before. They laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, and their sides did ache ; and the good-humored country folk laughed with them, taking all the merriment in good part.

After the dance, King Henry thanked his guests for joining in and adding to his amusement ; and then, looking round on the young court ladies, he said to Richard, “ And now, my gallant young friend, of all these noble damsels, which one dost thou like best ? And which will it please thee to wed ? ”

At these words, all the smiling beauties grew suddenly serious, thinking that his majesty was carrying the joke a little too far. But Master Richard, merely glanc-

ing at the fairest of them, coolly replied, "Faith, I want none of them. I like better my own red-headed sweetheart, Judy Grumble."

At this, there was more laughter, and all those pretty young ladies tossed their heads in merry disdain.

Then the king, calling to him the jolly miller, appointed him overseer of Sherwood Forest, with a pension of three hundred pounds, yearly. "Adieu, good friend," he said; "let us see thee once a quarter. And, Sir John, take heed that thou steal no more of my deer."

And this is the end of the story of "The King and the Miller of Mansfield."

THE ENGLISH MERCHANT AND THE SARACEN LADY.

IN the reign of Henry the First, of England, called *Beauclerc*, or Fine Scholar (for he was actually so learned that he could write his own name,—a great attainment for a king, in those days), there lived in London a rich young merchant, named Gilbert a Becket.

In that simple old time, the wonders of science and art, among which we walk and live just as if they had *always* been,—like the trees, the flowers, the sky, and the stars,—were never thought of, or dreamed of, except by the great poets, who, maybe, with their prophet-eyes, looked away into the far future, and saw them looming up above the coming ages, like mountain-peaks in the distance of a landscape. Then the great oceans could heave, and swell, and roar, and rage, and toss their mad

frothing waves up at the sky, as if to defy the great God ; and then, obedient to his will, grow quiet and smooth again — year after year, without one single ship venturing over their vast expanse, to be made afraid by their violence, or flattered by their calm, — and all the commerce of the world was scarcely equal to that of the smallest and poorest kingdoms of our times. Then going to sea was considered more perilous than going into battle ; voyagers never failed to make their wills, and set their worldly affairs in order, before they weighed anchor and set sail for foreign parts. To be sure, it has lately seemed very much as though we were fast going back to those old, doubtful, dangerous times, — those dark ages of navigation ; and that, after all our wonderful improvements and discoveries, we can count very little upon safe and prosperous voyages.

But to return to Gilbert à Becket. He was thought a brave and adventurous man, when he left his comfortable English home,

and sailed for the Holy Land, to trade with the rich Syrians for satins, velvet, and gems, which he meant to bring to England and sell at a great profit. He probably calculated by this speculation to double his fortune, and perhaps be able to buy a title, and so become one of the nobles of the land, and live in a brave castle, where he would receive the king and court, and entertain them in princely style. But, alas! titles and royal guests were not for him; and all the castle he was ever to lay claim to, was such "a castle in the air" as any one of us may build. He was taken prisoner by the Turks, robbed of his ship, sold as a slave, fettered, and set at work in the palace gardens of Mahmoud, a terrible, fierce-eyed, black-bearded, big-turbaned Saracen chief.

It was a very hard fortune, that of poor Gilbert. He was obliged to toil from morning till night, digging and spading, planting and weeding; and all the while, with the disadvantage of not knowing much



Gilbert a Becket a slave to the Saracens.

about the gardening business, and of having a heavy chain dragging and clanking at his ankles. You may depend that he felt if he could get safe back to England he would never more aspire to castles and titles, nor trouble himself if the king and the court never should eat a good dinner, or shake their heels at a ball again.

But often out of our greatest misfortune come our best good and happiness; and hope and joy often follow times of fear and sorrow, as beautiful rainbows are made out of storms that have just darkened the sky, and beaten down the flowers. One evening, just as the muezzin from the minarets was calling all pious Mussulmen to prayers, Gilbert à Becket stood leaning against a palm tree, resting a little from his daily toil, and thinking longingly of his country and home. Just then, a noble young Saracen lady, of marvelous beauty, called Zarina, chanced that way, on her evening walk, and was very much struck by the appearance of the stranger. In truth, as

Gilbert stood there, leaning so gracefully against the palm, with his pale face cast down, and his soft, auburn hair, half veiling his sad eyes, — to say nothing of his long golden eyelashes, and his curling, silken moustache, — he was a very handsome and interesting young man; and, in spite of that coarse gardner's dress, and that slavish chain, looked as proud and noble as a prince.

Zarina thought so, and, though very modest and timid, drew near to speak a few kind words to him. He looked up, at the sound of her light step, and, for the first time in many months, he smiled, gladdened by the sight of her beautiful, innocent face.

The ballad does not tell just how these two became acquainted; but it is certain that they soon grew to be excellent friends, and managed to meet often, and have long walks and talks in the shaded alleys and bowers of Mahmoud's gardens. They first talked of the birds and flowers; then of

the stars, and the moonlight ; then of love, and then of God. Gilbert told Zarina of the Christian's blessed faith, and related all the beautiful and marvelous stories of our Lord Jesus ; and Zarina wondered, and wept, and believed.

Gilbert had learned the Saracen language, and spoke it very well ; but Zarina did not understand the English at all. The first word of it that ever she spoke was "*yes*," which Gilbert taught her to say when he asked her if she would be his wife, whenever he could gain his freedom. But month after month—a whole year—went by, and Gilbert was still a captive.

One day, when Zarina met her lover in a shady garden-walk, she said, in a low, gentle voice, and with her tender eyes cast down, "I am a Christian now, dear Gilbert ; — I pray to thy God morning and night. Thou knowest I am an orphan. I love no one in all the world but thee ; then why should I stay here ? Why shouldst thou linger longer in bondage ?

Let us both fly to England. God will guide us safely over the wide, dark waters ; for we are Christians, and need not fear anything. I will meet thee to-night, on the sea-shore, and bring gold and jewels enough to purchase a vessel and hire a skillful crew. And when, O, my Gilbert, we are afloat on the broad, blue sea, sailing toward thy home, thou wilt bless me, and love me ; wilt thou not ? ”

The merchant kissed the maiden’s hand, and promised to meet her on the strand, at the appointed hour. And he did not fail ; but long he walked the lonely shore, and no light-footed Zarina came flitting through the deep night-shadows, and stealing to his side. North, south, east, and west he looked ; but all in vain. The night was clear, the winds whispered low, the little waves slid up the shining shore, and seemed to invite him to sail away over them, to the great sea beyond ; but the stars overhead twinkled so merrily, and winked so knowingly, that he almost fancied they had be-

trayed the story of his and Zarina's love and intended flight. At length he heard a quick, light step, and sprang forward with a joyful cry. Alas! it was not Zarina, but her faithful nurse, Safiè, who came to tell him that Zarina's love had been discovered, that her kinsmen had confined her in a strong, guarded tower, and that he must escape alone. She sent him a casket of gold and gems, with a promise that as soon as possible she would make her escape and come to him in London.

There really was nothing for Gilbert à Becket to do but to accept Zarina's casket of jewels, and follow her advice. So, after sending her many loving farewell messages by Safiè, he went.

He had a prosperous voyage, and reached London in safety, where he gave his friends a joyful surprise; for they had given him up for dead.

Year after year went by, and still he saw nothing, heard nothing, of his noble Saracen love, Zarina; and at last he grew to

think of her very sorrowfully and tenderly, as of one dead. But Zarina lived, and lived for him whom she loved, and who had taught her to love God. For years she was kept imprisoned in that lonely, guarded tower, near the sea, where she could only put her sorrow into mournful songs, and sigh her love out on the winds that blew toward England, and gaze up at the bright, kindly stars, and pray for Gilbert. But one night, while the guard slept, the brave maiden stole out on to the parapet, and leaped down many feet, to the ground below. She soon sprang up, unharmed, and made her way to the strand, when she took passage on a foreign vessel for Stamboul. Now, all the English that this poor girl remembered were the words "*Gilbert*" and "*London.*" These she repeated, in sad, pleading, inquiring tones, to every one she met; but nobody understood what she meant by them.

From Stamboul she went on her weary, wandering way, from port to port, and city

to city, till she had journeyed through many strange countries, repeating, everywhere, those two words of English ; but all in vain ; for, though everybody had heard of London, none knew Gilbert. Yet the people were very kind, and gave her food and shelter, out of pity for her sad face, and in return for the sweet songs which she sung.

At length, after many months of lonely and toilsome wandering, she reached England, and found herself amidst the busy, hurrying throngs of London. She gazed about her bewildered, and almost despairing, at finding it so large a place ;—it would be so much the harder to find *him*. Yet still, patiently and steadily, up and down the long streets, she went,—through market-place and square,—past churches and palaces,—singing her mournful songs,—speaking softly, and more and more sadly, the one beloved word, “*Gilbert!*”

One evening, as Gilbert à Becket, the rich merchant, sat at the banquet-table in

his splendid London house, entertaining a gay company of rich and noble guests, a servant brought him word that a beautiful Saracen maiden, pale and sorrowful-looking, stood in the square without, singing sad songs, and repeating his name over and over. In a moment Gilbert thought of his beloved Zarina, and, springing up from the table, he rushed out of his brilliant hall, into the street, where poor Zarina stood, with her long, dark hair glistening with the chill night-dew, and her sweet face looking very white and tearful in the moonlight.

He knew her at a glance, though she was sadly changed from the fair young girl he had left in the gardens of Mahmoud, as gay-hearted as the birds, and as blooming as the flowers. He called her name, he caught her in his arms, and the next time that she spoke the dear word, "Gilbert!" she murmured it against his heart, while his lips pressed her cheeks, and his eyes dropped happy, loving tears upon her brow. He took her into his princely house, and it

became her home from that hour. She was baptized, and took the Christian name of Matilda; but Gilbert always called her Zarina; for he said he loved that best.

The faithful lovers were married, and lived together for many years, happy, honored, and beloved. Their eldest son, Thomas à Becket, was a powerful and renowned archbishop in the reign of Henry the Second.

And so ends the true story of the “English Merchant and the Saracen Lady.”

THE BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER, OF BED- NALL-GREEN.

IN the old feudal times, some six hundred years ago, when England was in a troubled, unsettled state, often convulsed and desolated by civil wars, there might have been seen, through many summers, sitting in the shade of an oak tree, on Bednall-Green, — a part of London town, — a certain beggar-man, blind, but of a very noble and venerable appearance. He was led by a dog, and sometimes he was accompanied by his wife, — a handsome and stately person, though clad in gray russet, like any poor peasant woman, — and sometimes by his daughter, a beautiful little girl, whom he called Bessee.

When this child grew into womanhood her beauty was so remarkable that in spite of her humble parentage she had many admirers and suitors. But the fathers of her

lovers would never consent to a marriage with a beggar's daughter, and their mothers despised her, and would sometimes come to reproach and scold her to her face, as though the poor girl could help her beauty or her birth.

At length she grew very discontented and sorrowful, and told her father and mother that she wished to leave Bednall-Green, where she was creating so much disquiet in respectable families, and that she had resolved to go forth to seek her fortune elsewhere.

It was long ere the beggar and his wife would consent to part with their darling Bessee. But at last, as they saw that she was no longer cheerful or comfortable at home, they gave her their blessing, with kisses and many tears, and bade her go. She set forth at night, to avoid being followed by her troublesome lovers. She kept up heart until after she was out of sight or hearing of her parents; then she burst into tears, and sobbed bitterly for many a weary

mile. She walked all night long ; and just at daybreak entered the town of Rumford, where she found entertainment at the Queen's Arms.

The mistress of the inn was so pleased with the stranger that she wished to keep her for a housemaid. Yet she was so puzzled by Bessee's appearance — for though clad in gray russet, the maiden had the air and delicate beauty of a born lady — that she did not venture to offer her the situation. But after a little while Bessee very humbly asked to be employed at the inn as a servant ; and both master and mistress were glad to engage her. So amiable and prudent was she that all in the household grew to loving her very dearly. And that was not all ; — greatly to the pretty maid's annoyance, she was soon surrounded by as many admirers as at Bednall-Green. All the gay young men of the town seemed suddenly to have discovered that the finest ale and the best cakes in Rumford were to be found at the little roadside inn, where

served the fair blue-eyed girl, to whom every body gave the name of "Pretty Bessee." Thither they flocked, in crowds, greatly to the delight of the innkeeper and his wife, whose business thrived the more, the more the maid's beauty and grace were noised about. But Bessee, though kind and courteous to all, was modest and prudent; and though her lovers sang her praises in sweet songs, very tender and mournful, and though they sent her beautiful gifts of silver and gold, when they sewed for her hand, she always shook her head firmly, and said with a sigh, "Nay, nay; none of gentle blood or high estate should wed with me."

Four suitors, at one time, fair Bessee had, who loved her so fondly that they would not be put off by a shake of her pretty head, nor by her "Nay, gentles!" though many times repeated. The first was a noble young knight, who came to her disguised, so that she did not know his rank; yet she liked him best of all. The second

was a country gentleman, of a proud and ancient family. The third was a rich merchant of London ; and the fourth was her master's own son, a bold young gallant, who swore big oaths of love, and declared himself ready to die for "Pretty Bessee," at the shortest notice.

"If thou wilt marry me," said the knight, "I will make thee a lady, with the greatest joy and pride ; for I am not what I seem, but a nobleman of high degree."

At these words, Bessee started and turned very pale, feeling grieved, not glad, to know that the man she liked best of all the world was so far above her.

Then spoke the country gentleman. "If thou wilt wed me, thou shalt be a lady as fine as any in the land, and never toil more with those dainty hands. My life is drear without thee, 'Pretty Bessee'; a wretched man am I, for want of thy dear love."

Then spoke the rich merchant, saying, with a proud smile, "Choose me for thy husband, gentle maid, and thou shalt live

in London, after a gay and gallant fashion. My ships shall bring home silks and jewels for thee, and I will love thee better than all the world."

When the merchant said this, Bessee looked at him very demurely, but with a quiet little smile hovering round her sweet, rosy mouth, — a smile that seemed to say, "I know thee well, good sir, and just how far this great love will go — just how much thy brave vows are worth." She gave the same look to the gentleman, and to the inn-keeper's son; but when she glanced at the noble face of the knight she sighed. Yet to each one she returned the same answer: "I mean always to obey my dear father and mother. Thou must first gain their consent before I can promise thee my love."

Each suitor willingly assented to this, and eagerly asked, "Where does thy good father dwell, 'Pretty Bessee'?"

Truly and bravely then answered Bessee: "My father, alas! is well known as

the old blind beggar of Bednall-Green. Daily sits he there, asking charity of all good Christians. You cannot miss him. When he walks he is led by a dog with a bell. A poor, blind old man, God knoweth! Yet he is the father of Bessee, to whom she oweth and giveth all love and duty."

The rich merchant drew himself up, grew very red in the face, and said, bluntly, "Then, fair damsel, thou art not for me;" and went his ways in stately haste, like one of his ships under full sail. The inn-keeper's gallant son tossed his nose high in the air, and said, insolently, "If it be so, look not to be my wife. I cannot stoop so low from my degree, even for thy pretty face, my winsome lass." As for the gentleman, he took off his plumed hat, and, bowing low, said, with a mocking smile, "I pray thy pardon, my fair mistress, but thy father's calling pleases me little. In truth, I loathe a beggar's degree; and so am forced to say adieu to 'Pretty Bessee.'"

The beggar's noble daughter heard each lover's reply without grief and without shame, and looked him out of her presence with a smile of quiet scorn. But when it came the young knight's turn to speak her breath came fast, and she could not lift her eyes to his face, for fear that he, too, might disdain her. But there was little cause for fear. With a frank laugh, and in a manly, cheery voice, he said, "As for me, come better or worse, I weigh not gold or rank against true love; and beauty and goodness are the same in every degree. To me thou wilt be welcome for thyself alone, my 'Pretty Bessee.' "

You may be sure that the beggar's daughter did not look cold or scornful at this brave reply. She blushed with sudden joyfulness, while tears of gratitude and affection shone in her sweet blue eyes.

She soon consented to accompany her lover to Bednall-Green, to ask the consent of her parents to her marriage.

But meanwhile the knight's kinsmen

had heard of his strange choice of a wife, and were greatly incensed against him ; declaring that their ancient and honorable family should not be disgraced by such an alliance. To prevent their interference with his plans, the knight stole away from Rumford at daybreak, carrying Bessee before him on a swift steed. Away sped they, like the wind, toward Bednall-Green ; but like the wind came on behind them certain gallant young men of Rumford, who had heard of "Pretty Bessee's" elopement, and, like so many dogs of the manger, were determined that if they could not marry her, no one should. "Death," they cried, "to the bold knave who would rob us of the fair maid who pours our ale and serves our cakes with such a dainty grace !"

Just as the lovers had reached the blind beggar's door, the young men overtook them, set upon the knight most furiously, and would have slain him had not his kinsmen, also out in pursuit of him, come to the rescue. When the noble gentlemen



The Beggar dropping Angels with the Knight for his Daughter.

had sent the Rumford gallants about their business they began to reproach the knight for his folly, and to rail at Bessee for a low-born, designing beggar-girl. Then up spoke the maid's father, standing erect, a tall, venerable figure, — the great white cloud of his silvery hair flung back from his brow, and his pale cheek flushing with anger, — “Though I be a beggar-man,” he said, “rail not in this unmannerly way at my child, before mine own door! Though she be decked not in velvet and jewels, she is not so poor as she seems. I will drop angells* with you, for my dear little girl; and if the gold that I shall bring forth shall seem to you to make up for her lowly birth, and equal what you can lay down, you must no longer rail at her, or forbid your kinsman to make a lady of the blind beggar's daughter. But first you must promise me that all the gold you lay down shall be your own.”

* An “angell” was an ancient English coin.

“So be it; we promise,” cried the chief nobleman of the knight’s proud family, with a merry, derisive laugh.

“Well, then,” says the blind beggar, “here’s for my Bessee!” throwing down an angell. The nobles then threw down one, the beggar another, and so on; till all their purses were exhausted, and the blind man had dropped full three thousand pounds,—often flinging down two or three for the gentlemen’s one. Then, when the ground where they stood was completely covered with gold, they cried out, “Hold, thou wonderful beggar-man! We have no more. Thou hast fulfilled thy promise aright.”

“Then,” said the old man, authoritatively, like one used to command, “marry my daughter to your kinsman; and here are a hundred pounds more, to buy her a wedding gown.”

“Agreed, venerable sir!” was the response. “And now, we look at thy daughter more closely, we see that she is

of marvellous beauty and fairness." This said, they each and all took Bessee by the hand, and adopted her into their great family, with a brotherly kiss, vowing that her lips were as sweet and soft as those of any grand lady in the realm ; whereat the modest maid blushed scarlet, and the knight at her side frowned with sudden anger.

After this, Bessee's father and mother embraced her, blessed her, and placed her hand in that of her lover. And so was the beggar's daughter betrothed to a great noble, comely and passing rich, and, what was better, a true and honorable man.

When the innkeeper's son heard of Bessee's good fortune he roared with grief and spite. "Three thousand angells! Woe is me!" he cried. And the innkeeper's wife said, "Now thou hast gone and done for thyself, thou simpleton!" When the rich merchant heard of it, rich as he was, he cursed his ill luck, as though his best ship had foundered at sea. But when the

proud country gentleman heard of it, little cared he ; — “Natheless, she is a beggar’s daughter,” he said.

It was soon announced that the wedding of “Pretty Bessee” was to take place in the great cathedral of Westminster, and was to be followed by a banquet in the palace of her noble lover. All was to be conducted with the greatest possible pomp and splendor. All sorts of rare dainties, rich meats, and costly wines were provided for the banquet. Beautiful dresses and magnificent jewels were purchased for the bride, with palfreys, hawks, and hounds, and all kinds of elegant pets and playthings. Ladies and pages were appointed to wait on her, and her boudoir, or bower, was hung anew with lovely blue silk, that seemed to drip with pearls, and decorated with paintings and gilding, till it was fit for a fairy princess.

This strange and romantic marriage made such a noise among the high circles

of England that all the nobles and great folk were eager to attend the wedding ; — the gentlemen curious to see what manner of damsel it was who had caused a great nobleman to forget his pride of birth, and all he owed to his high and mighty ancestors ; — the ladies longing yet dreading to behold the face whose beauty had made him indifferent to all their high-born pretensions to good looks.

Before the high altar of the great cathedral, Bessee, followed by her ladies and pages, and looking resplendantly lovely, met her noble lord, in magnificent attire, accompanied by a gay troop of gentlemen, all jewelled and plumed most gallantly.

No less a dignitary than a bishop joined the hands of the loving pair, and gave them his august blessing. Then from the vast cathedral organ broke forth a mighty melody, so grand, so solemn, that it was like the great thunder of heaven softened and Christianized into music. This was followed by a burst of singing, so sweet, so

triumphant, that it filled every heart, and made every soul feel as though it was putting on its angel-wings, to soar upward, with those glad, delicious strains, to a purer and brighter world than ours.

At the banquet, the guests gazed often and long at the bride, who sat by her lord, at the head of the table, looking so modest and gracious that even the proud court ladies forgot their envy, in admiration, and the best eaters and drinkers slighted the dainty dishes and rich wines before them, to watch her, and talk of her beauty and good fortune.

At length, one of the nobles exclaimed, "I marvel that we do not see here the jolly blind beggar. Methinks he should have been bid to his daughter's wedding."

The bride overheard this, and answered; very gently, "My lord, my father was too humble, or too proud, to thrust himself upon so stately a company. He thinks his condition too lowly for such consorting."

“If it were not too flattering a thing to utter to a fair lady’s face, we should say we think thy father’s lowliness would be more than made up for by thine exceeding beauty,” replied the nobleman, with a pleasant smile.

Just at this moment, there entered the great hall the blind beggar himself, but richly clad in a silk robe, with a plumed velvet cap ; so that no one, save the bride and bridegroom, recognized him. He carried a lute under his arm, and, asking permission of the company, began to play upon it, with great skill and sweetness, to the delight of all present, who declared him to be “a marvellous cunning minstrel.” After a delicate prelude, he sung this song :

“A poor beggar’s daughter did dwell on a green,
Who, for her fairness, might well be a queen ;
A blithe, bonny lass, and a dainty was she ;
And many one called her Pretty Bessee.

“Her father he had no goods, nor no land,
But begged for a penny, all day, with his hand ,

And yet to her marriage he gave thousands three,
And still he hath somewhat for Pretty Bessee.

“And if any one here her birth do disdain,
Her father is ready, with might and with main,
To prove she is come of noble degree ;
Therefore never flout at Pretty Bessee.”

On hearing the boast with which this song concluded, the gay company began to laugh heartily ; and one merrily cried out, “I’ faith, sir minstrel, the bride and the beggar are beholden to thee ! Thou dost make quick work at ennobling them, in thy song.”

Then up rose the bride, all blushing and tearful, and said, “O, pardon my father, I pray you, my lords and gentlemen ! He dotes upon me with such blind affection that he doth dream these things.”

“If this be thy father, sweet lady,” said one of the nobles, with grave courtesy, “he may well be proud of this day, — may well boast of thee ; and it is plain to be seen, by his countenance and air, that his birth and his fortunes do not agree.

And therefore," he continued, turning to the beggar, "we pray thee to reveal the truth, and, for the love thou bearest thy fair daughter, declare thy rank and thy parentage."

At these words, a smile, half proud, half mournful, lit the melancholy face of the blind man; and, running his slender, white fingers over the chords of his lute, he sung to the listening company another song, which contained the true story of his rank and fortune. This story I will tell you, in prose.

The minstrel began by celebrating the heroic fame of Sir Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester, who was the chosen chief of the proud English barons, in a rebellion against their king. He was victorious in several contests; but finally, in the bloody battle of Evesham, the barons were routed, and their brave leader slain.

Fighting side by side with Sir Simon de Montfort, on that fatal day, was his eldest son, Henry, who was often wounded,

and finally struck down by a blow across the eyes, which deprived him forever of his sight. All the night which followed the great battle, the poor young nobleman lay among the dead and dying, bleeding and helpless, and only knew when it was day by the warmth of the sunlight falling upon his face, — the beautiful sunlight he was never more to behold! All day he lay there, in darkness and pain, thirsting, fainting, praying for death to give him release, and lead him to the light. He lay there till he knew, by the dew falling upon his parched lips, that another night had come. Then God sent to his help an angel, not of death, but of life. A baron's fair daughter came forth, to seek among the slain for her father's body, and seeing young De Montfort, and hearing his piteous moans, she was so moved by compassion that she had her servitors bear him to her castle. There she nursed him, secretly, for many weeks, until he was cured of all his wounds. He thought himself well

enough to leave his hiding-place before his kind friend would hear of such a thing ; but one day, when he spoke of going, and the lady still urged him to stay longer, he broke out passionately, saying he *must* go ; — that already he had grown to love his benefactress, whose face he had never seen, more than all the beauty his lost eyes had ever beheld, — more than the glorious green of his native fields, the bloom of flowers, or the dear light of heaven ; and that if he lingered any longer he should lose all power to part with her.

“ My poor friend, where will you go, and what will you do, without me, who am your eyes, now, you know,” said the lady, very gently, taking the hand which was groping about for hers to clasp in farewell. “ Listen to me, De Montfort. — My father is dead ; my kinsmen are slain or banished ; the king will seize upon my lands, as he has seized upon thine ; and I shall soon be as poor and friendless as thou art. Take me with thee, to serve and comfort

thee. I have no refuge but thee ; besides," she added, softly, almost in a whisper, "I, too, love thee, — love thee all the better for thy misfortunes, and cannot let thee go forth into the dark, cruel world, alone."

O, very gladly the young soldier consented ! and soon the noble lovers were married, by a good priest, who faithfully kept their secret. The lady sold her jewels, for a large sum of money, which she treasured up for future need. For the present, the only safety of her husband was in humbleness and apparent poverty. He was believed to have been slain at the battle of Evesham ; but should his enemies now discover him he would speedily suffer death.

So it was that the rightful Earl of Leicester and his fair wife clothed themselves in russet, and lived like the poorest peasants ; — that he who had once taken his place with the proudest nobles of the land became the "Blind Beggar of Bednall-Green."

It was not till after they had been married many years that Heaven sent "Pretty Bessee" to bring brightness and sweet comfort to the lowly cottage of the Montforts. She grew up a good and prudent girl; but never, till the day when he saw her the wife of a powerful noble, in high favor with the king, had her father dared to reveal, even to her, her honorable birth, and his own true name.

"This, my lords," said the minstrel, "is the end of the story of one who once belonged to your own rank. I should never have revealed the secret but for my Bessee's sake. For myself, I should be content to die as unnoted and despised as I have lived these forty years; yet shall I be well content to see my Bessee's mother honored according to her great deserts, — as a lady born, as well as the truest wife that lives in all our England."

When he ceased, there softly stepped forth, from the crowd around him, a tall, fair woman, richly but simply clad, — not young, but still beautiful and stately, —

who walked majestically to the minstrel's side, and laid her hand on his shoulder. And the old man, standing up very proudly, said to all the company, in the grand, unforgotten way of a great noble, "My wife!"

At this, all the lords and ladies came forward, and reverently greeted her, and gave their hands to her husband, addressing him by his ancient title. Then they kissed and embraced the fair bride, — who was smiling and weeping, with surprise and joy, — and congratulated her that she was one of them, — of as good blood as any in the realm.

So "Pretty Bessee" was proved to be a lady born; but, to the generous young lord who stood so proud and happy by her side, she was no better, fairer, or dearer, for all that; though that it was a good thing he did not deny.

The old ballad says that the banquet ended most joyfully, and that the noble knight spent a long and happy life with this gentle lady, the "Pretty Bessee."

THE HEIR OF LINNE.

A LONG, long time ago, somewhere in Scotland, there lived a young lord, the Lord of Linne. His father had been a good old man, and his mother a high-born lady; but they were both dead, leaving him sole heir to the wide lands and stately house belonging to his title.

He was of a gay, careless, reckless disposition; but he had, withal, a frank, warm, generous heart, which, at first, I doubt not, prompted him to spend his money freely, because it seemed to make others happy. But before long he found his way into the company of a set of gay, dissolute young men, and spent his days with them, in merry carousings, and his nights in revelling, and drinking, and gaming; scattering his wealth with so free a hand that his friends half concluded his

father must have left him, instead of a limited quantity of gold, the purse of Fortunatus, or a "magic rose," such as the fairy gave to Prince Leander, from which, you remember, as he shook it, there fell a golden rain.

But, as I said before, his father and mother were dead, and he had no good friends near to caution or advise him ; or, if he had, he did not heed them ; and so he went on, in this mad, reckless way, hunting, and coursing, and feasting, — "always spending, and never sparing," — until all his gold was gone.

Instead of being frightened, as one would expect him to be, at this condition of things, it seems only to have made him more mad and reckless than ever ; for he determined to sell his house and lands.

A man who had been the steward of the old Lord of Linne — a cunning, covetous, miserly knave, who, by one means and another, had got rich, and become a "gentleman" — is now brought into the story.

His name was John o' the Scales, and he wanted very much to make himself master of the lands and title of Linne. So, when he found the Heir had spent all his money, he said to him that if he wanted to sell his house and lands, he would give him good store of gold for them. The rash young Heir, without pause or thought, at once drew up the deeds which were to make John o' the Scales lord of all the broad, beautiful lands of Linne, and of the grand old house where his ancestors, maybe, had lived for centuries ; where he himself was born, — an only son ; where his dear, dead mother had watched over him, and cared for him, and kissed him so many, many blessed times ; where his good, kind old father had humored and spoiled his boyhood, and unconsciously led the way to the wasteful, wanton life he was now leading. But let us be generous enough to believe that in his wild excitement he did not remember these things. At all events, if he did the remembrance was not strong

enough to stay his hand from signing the deeds. He sold all to John o' the Scales, — all, save one poor little lodge, that stood far off in a lonely glen; and for every pound that John gave him the land was well worth three.

The old Lord of Linne seems to have foreseen, or, at least, feared, the thriftless course of his son; for, as you will see, before he died he contrived a very ingenious plan for saving him from utter poverty, and turning him away from his idle, wicked life.

One day, not long before he died, he called him to him, and said, “My son, when I am gone thou wilt spend thy lands and gold; but swear to me, on this cross, that thou wilt never part with the little lodge that stands in the lonesome glen; for when all the world doth frown on thee, there thou wilt find a friend.”

One would think that when the remembrance of that oath came to the Heir, as it did, — for you remember he did not sell

the lodge,—it would have brought with it such a feeling of shame that his father's prediction of his prodigality had come so true, that he would have kept out of his old, bad ways, for a little while, at least. But no; he at once called his gay companions about him, and said, "Come, my friends, let's drink, and riot, and make merry again!"

They said to themselves, "The Fortunatus purse is mended,—the rose has recovered its magic;" and led him on to wilder dissipation than ever.

But by and by, the purse was again worn out,—the rose lost its magic once more; and all that remained to the poor Heir of Linne of his broad lands and yellow gold were three pennies,—one of brass, one of lead, and one of silver. He then began to repent of his wastefulness; but he quickly consoled himself with the thought that he had many trusty friends, who, as he had given so freely to them, would be glad of the opportunity to return

his kindness. Poor fellow ; — he knew but little of the world. One was not at home ; another had just paid all his money away ; and a third called him a thriftless loon, and bade him go about his business. So he settled sorrowfully down to the reflection that he who had been the owner of a noble house and vast estates, — who had spent his gold bounteously as a king, — who had given splendid feasts, and revels without number, — was now left without house, without lands, without money, and without friends ; — with nothing to do but to beg or steal. But he was too proud to do the first, and still too noble to do the other.

Just then, the remembrance of his oath to his father came back to him again ; and at once off he started, over hill and hollow, and moor and fen, till he came to the little low lodge in the lonely glen. He looked at it, up and down, in the hope that there might be something in its appearance to cheer and comfort him ; but alas ! it was a

sorry place to look to for comfort ; — the walls were damp, mouldy, bare, and cheerless, and there was but one little window, all darkened up with vines of ivy, briar, and yew. No cheering sunlight or playful breeze ever found its way there. It was the very picture of desolation and loneliness ; and the poor Heir of Linne leaned against the wall, completely overcome by grief, shame, and remorse. Presently, when his eyes had become a little accustomed to the gloom, he saw a rope, with a running noose, dangling above his head, and over it, in large letters, were written these words :

“ Ah, graceless wretch ! hast spent thine all,
And brought thyself to penury.

“ All this my boding mind misgave ;
I therefore left this trusty friend.
Let it now shield thy foul disgrace,
And all thy shame and sorrows end.”

As the poor, outcast Heir read these words, his heart was ready to burst with

shame and sorrow ; but he choked down his feelings, and said to himself, " This is a trusty friend indeed, and is right welcome unto me."

He shut his teeth hard, put the rope about his neck, and sprang up from the floor, when at once down he tumbled to the ground, with the rope and part of the ceiling on top of him. He lay there a little while, half stunned by the fall, hardly knowing whether he was alive or dead ; but, quickly reviving, he crawled out from under the fragments of the ceiling, when he spied among them a piece of paper. He picked it up, and out fell a little key of gold. The paper told him of a secret hole in the wall, in which there were hidden three chests. It did not take him long to find the hole, you may depend, nor to teach the little gold key to say " Open sesame !" to the three chests. Two of them were full of beaten gold, and one was full of silver ; and over them was written, " Once more, my son, I set thee

clear. Forsake thy follies, and amend thy sinful life. If thou dost not, this rope will surely be thy end, at last."

Tears of sincere repentance came into the tender blue eyes of the Heir of Linne, as he read these words, and thought of the dear, dead father who had written them; and, solemnly kneeling down, he vowed to henceforth live a nobler, better life.

Then he fastened up the chests securely, after having taken some bags of gold out of one of them, and started off, with a swift foot and light heart, to the house of John o' the Scales. When he got there, he found a gay company, with three lords among them, sitting and drinking wine with John, who sat at the head of the table; for he was now Lord of Linne.

Putting on a piteous face, the Heir said, "I pray thee, good John o' the Scales, to lend me forty pence."

At this speech, John grew very red and angry. "Away, thou thriftless loon,

away!" said he; "a curse be upon my head if ever I lend thee one penny!"

Then the Heir turned to the wife of John, and said, "Madame, bestow some alms on me, I pray you, for sweet Saint Charity's sake."

But the wife was even more heartless than the husband. She, too, bade him "Away!" half threatening to have him hung.

But one of the company at the table — a good-hearted, honest fellow — said, "Turn again, thou Heir of Linne. Once thou wast a right good lord, and spent thy gold merrily; therefore *I'll* lend thee forty pence, and forty more, if need be." Then, turning around, he said, "And John o' the Scales, I pray thee let him make one of our company; for well I know thou didst get his lands at a right good bargain."

John o' the Scales sprang up, with his face even redder than before, and said, in a loud, coarse tone, "Now, may Christ's

curse light upon my head if I did not *lose* by that bargain !” Then, turning about to the Heir of Linne, he said, with a sneering, cunning look, “ And here, before these good lords, I offer thee back thy bargain, at a hundred marks less than I did buy it of thee.”

At this, the Heir of Linne started quickly forward, exclaiming, “ By my faith, I take thee at thy word, and call these lords to witness Here’s thy money !”

With that he drew forth three bags of gold, and laid them down upon the table, before John o’ the Scales, who sat there so full of rage and astonishment that he could not say a word. The Heir of Linne then opened the bags, and counted out the bright gold pieces, one by one, making them ring upon the table, as he did so, just to aggravate John o’ the Scales, who writhed and twisted in his chair, furious with rage, to think that he was not only no longer the lord and owner of the fine house

and wide lands of Linne, but that he had parted with them at a hundred marks less than the price he had paid the Heir for them.

Like a great many other men who strive to get along rapidly in the world, by making good bargains for themselves, and bad ones for those with whom they deal, John o' the Scales had overreached himself. He knew that he had not paid the Heir of Linne one half the worth of his lands, but supposing that of course the poor Heir, who had just been begging for forty pence, could have no gold, he thought that by the cunning trick of offering to sell them back to him, at even a less sum than he had given, he could make the lords believe he *had* made a bad bargain. But we have seen how sadly mistaken he was.

After the Heir had counted out before John the right amount, he said, "The gold is thine ; the land is mine ; and now I am again the Lord of Linne." Then, turning to the young man who had offered to lend

him the forty pence, he continued, "Come here, thou good fellow! For the forty pence thou didst lend me, I *give* thee forty pounds; and I'll make thee keeper of my forest, both of the wild deer and the tame." As the other, feeling that he had only done a simple, manly act, which needed no reward, was about to protest, the Heir quickly added, "If I did not reward thy generous heart, I were much to blame."

All this time, Joan, the wife of John o' the Scales, — who, by the way, was a great, fat, funny-looking old woman, — was rolling herself about in her chair, making the queerest faces, and moaning to herself, "Now, well-a-day! woe is my life! Yesterday I was Lady of Linne, and now I am only the wife of John o' the Scales!" and here she fell to making more queer faces, and rolling herself about still more absurdly, till the old butler of the house, who was delighted to have his young master back again, took her by the arm, and pointed to the door, out of which

John was just shuffling, his face all twisted up with the ugliest frown imaginable. She shook the butler's hand off angrily, seizd her cane, and waddled out after her husband, just as the Heir of Linne exclaimed, "Fare thee well, John o' the Scales ; and may a curse come upon me if ever I put my lands in jeopardy again !"

And so the ballad ends.

SIR PATRICK SPENS.

IN the royal palace, in Dunfermline town, King Alexander the Third, an ancient Scottish monarch, sat at the banquet table, with his queen and courtiers, drinking rich, red wine, and eating luscious fruit. A proud earl, at his right hand, was humbly waiting on him ; the young sons of great lords were acting as pages and cup-bearers ; a famous minstrel stood ready with his lute, to sing a splendid ode in praise of his high mightiness ; and doubtless the old king's heart would have swelled with pride, and danced with pleasant jollity, on the occasion, had it not been that as he looked about him his eyes fell on no noble prince or fair princess, to rule in his place, and wear his crown, when he should be called to go " the way of all the earth," kings not excepted.

Alexander had no living children, and the heir to his throne was his grandchild, the young daughter of the King of Norway. Somehow, this day he felt, more than ever before, a longing to see this little princess ; and as he had just had a fine new ship built, he resolved to send for her at once. So, looking round at his courtiers, he asked, "Can any of you tell me where I can get a skillful skipper, to sail this new ship of mine?"

One of the knights who sat at the right of the king answered, that, in his opinion, Sir Patrick Spens was the best sailor that ever sailed the sea.

Now, it was the winter time, — a very dangerous season for navigation, in those northern seas ; but the king was not going to sail himself ; and kings are not apt to make much account of the lives of even the best of their subjects. So Alexander at once called for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a letter with his own royal hand, and sealed it with his big royal seal, com-

manding Sir Patrick Spens to make the voyage to Norway, and bring home King Eric's daughter, without loss of time.

This letter was brought to Sir Patrick when he was walking on the strand, thinking over his perilous voyages, and thanking Heaven that he was to be safe on land for two good months, or more. When he opened the letter, and glanced at the grand signature, he laughed a glad, proud laugh, lifted his head high, and stepped haughtily, as a correspondent of kings should ; but before he had read all, the bitter tears almost blinded his eyes, and he exclaimed, " O ! who has done this unfriendly deed ? Who has put it into the rash old king's head to send me out to sea, at this blustering time of year ? Be it wind, or rain, or hail, or sleet, we must sail the foam ; for this daughter of the King of Norway must, at all hazards, be brought to Dunfermline, to sit on her grandpapa's knee, and learn how to govern us unruly Scots."

But though Sir Patrick murmured a

little, he obeyed, like a loyal subject and sensible man ; for he knew he could not help himself, and he preferred the chance of drowning to the certainty of losing his head. So, on the next Wednesday, he set sail, with a gay company of noble young Scots, whom the king sent as an escort for the princess, his granddaughter.

The weather proved fair, and they landed in Norway on Monday, and presented themselves at court without delay.

They found the princess a very little girl indeed, whom it seemed a pity to take away from her nurse, her dolls, and pets, and carry over the wintry sea, to a strange country. King Eric probably treated his guests politely, — invited them to dinner, once or twice, — got up a famous hunting party for them, and kept all the game for his own kitchen, but he certainly did not dispatch business according to Sir Patrick's ideas ; for he detained him and the Scottish nobles for a fortnight, and yet the princess and her train were not ready. Then the

Norwegian courtiers, who seem to have been a mean, inhospitable set of men, began to say, in the faces of their guests, "You Scots are overstaying your welcome;—you are spending all the gold and silver of our king and queen, and eating and drinking them out of palace and home."

Then Sir Patrick's blood was up, I can assure you; and, like the rough, honest sailor he was, he told the insolent Norwegians that they lied, and lied again!—that he and his men had spent their own money, and paid their own way; and that, princess or no princess, he would not stay another hour in such a churlish and shabby court. So he called together the Scottish lords, and commanded his men to hoist sail, and put out to sea directly.

One of the old sailors begged his master to delay a day or two; because, the night before, he had seen the new moon "with the old moon in her arms;" and he was sure that a deadly storm was coming up.

But Sir Patrick was too angry and proud to hear to reason ; — put out to sea he would ; and put out to sea he did.

They had not sailed more than three leagues before the sky grew black, and the winds grew loud, and the great waves began to rage and roar about them, and dash over and over the ship.

In the midst of the tempest, Sir Patrick cried, “ Where will I get a man to hold the helm, while I go aloft to see if I can spy land.”

And a brave sailor answered, “ Here am I, ready to take the helm, while you climb the topmast ; but much I fear, dear master, that you will never more see land.”

Sir Patrick had hardly taken a step when a bolt was wrenched out of the ship’s side, and the sea came pouring in.

Then Sir Patrick commanded his men to bring a web of silken cloth from the cabin, and stuff it into the hole in the ship’s side. This they did, but still the sea came pouring in. It flooded the rich tapestried

cabin ; it dashed up over the purple dais, put there for the princess and her maids ; it flowed, and foamed, and gushed, and gurgled everywhere, rising higher and higher.

The dainty young lords were loth, at first, to wet their high-heeled silken shoes ; but before their trouble was over their velvet hats and gay plumes were quite as badly wet ; for they all went down, — passengers and crew ; and King Alexander's fine new ship was a total loss.

Many were the beautiful court ladies, at Dunfermline, who sat with their fans in their hands, and their gold combs in their hair, waiting for their lovers to come back from Norway ; but never, never did they see Sir Patrick's ship come sailing to the strand. They longed, and waited, and watched in vain ; for, full forty miles off Aberdeen, where the water was fifty fathoms deep, Sir Patrick Spens — a good sailor, but a rather too hasty and hot-

headed old gentleman — lay at the bottom
of the sea,

“ With the Scots lords at his feet.”

As for the princess, the ballad does not say that she was on board the ship at all ; but history tells us that when Alexander of Scotland was killed, by a fall from his horse, this grandchild was declared the rightful heir to his throne ; and, though then only eight years old, was sent for, to be made Queen of the Scots. King Edward the First, of England, proposed that she should be married to his eldest son ; and a most magnificent future seemed opening before her. But, alas ! on her voyage across the rough, northern water, the poor little girl fell ill with sea-sickness, and, perhaps, home-sickness ; and though she landed on one of the Orkney islands, she got no better, but grew worse, and died.

Her death caused great troubles and

disputes in Scotland, which finally grew into long and terrible wars. But I doubt not it was better and happier for the child to be so early called away from the perils, and cares, and temptations of royalty, than to have reached Scotland, ascended her grandpapa's throne, held his heavy sceptre in her small, white hand, and worn his great crown on her bonnie little head.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

ONCE there lived on the estate of the Earl of Balcarres, in Scotland, a humble peasant family, consisting of a poor old couple and their one daughter, Jenny, a young woman who was famed, through all the country round, for her beauty, and loved for her goodness.

Jenny had a lover, whose name was Jamie, — a good, brave, and handsome young man, but poor, like herself. Indeed, when he asked Jenny to promise to be his wife, he had only one crown-piece in his pocket. To make this crown a pound, he took leave of his betrothed, and went to sea.

He had not been gone much over a year when Jenny's father broke his arm, and her mother fell sick, and Crummie, the cow, that might almost have supported

them all with her milk, was stolen ; and a rich old gentleman, by the name of Robin Gray, came a-courting Jenny. Poor girl ! she had a very hard time of it. Her father could not do any work ; her mother could only sit propped up with pillows, in an arm-chair, and watch her daughter toiling, hour after hour, for their daily bread. Sometimes she would beg that her little wheel might be brought to her, and she would *try* to spin ; but she was so weak, and her hand trembled so, that she always had to give over very soon ; and when her daughter put away the wheel she would look after her, with tears in her dim, old eyes, and then put on her spectacles, and take up her Bible, so that Jenny should not see her cry.

But with all that this poor girl could do, by working all day, and nearly all night, she could not support her parents and herself ; so they were obliged to accept help from old Robin Gray, who would not see them want for anything. To be sure, he

did them this kindness principally because he wanted Jenny for his wife.

“I know, Jenny,” he would say, “that I am but a plain, rough old man, whom you can’t fancy much ; but if, for the sake of the poor old folks, you will marry me, I will be a good son to them, and a kind husband to you.”

But Jenny always refused ; for, you know, she had given her heart and her promise to Jamie ; and she expected him home every day. But, instead of him, there came the news that his ship had been wrecked, and that all on board were lost. So, with all her other troubles, Jenny had to mourn for her drowned lover ; and things were a great deal worse than before ; for now she had no dear hope to keep her up.

Then her father reasoned with her, trying to persuade her to marry good old Robin Gray. Her mother did not say anything, but she looked into her daughter’s eyes with such a pleading, pitiful look, that Jenny could not bear it. So, at

last, she gave her hand to old Robin Gray ; but she told him that the best love of her heart was away down in the dark, deep sea, where her dear, lost Jamie was lying.

Well, these two were married ; and old Robin was as good as his word. He always treated his pretty young wife very kindly, and he made the old people very comfortable indeed.

But Jenny had not been married many weeks, when, one day, as she was sitting alone, on the stone steps, at the cottage door, she thought she saw her Jamie's ghost ! But she soon found that it was the young sailor himself, escaped from the wreck ; for he clasped her in his arms, saying, " I have come home, my love, to marry you."

Then she was obliged to tell him all ;— how she had believed him drowned ; and how she was already married, for the sake of her poor father and mother ; and that he must not call her his Jenny any more, but Mrs. Robin Gray, of Balcarres.

Jamie did not blame her, though he was shocked and grieved to tears. They both wept, and then parted, supposing it was forever.

Poor Jenny was now sadder than ever. She grew paler and thinner every day. She did not care to spin any more, and she never laughed nor sung, as she used to do. But she was always kind to her father and mother, and tried her best to be a loving wife to old Robin Gray, who was very good to her.

As for him, he was so grieved to see her moping about in this way, and blamed himself so much for her unhappiness, that he finally took to his bed, with his death-sickness. He would not take any medicine, for he said that he did not care to live.

He called his friends together, and confessed that he had done wrong, in taking advantage of the illness and poverty of the old folks, to get Jenny to be his wife. He even owned that *he* had stolen Crum-

mie, the cow, so that the family should have no dependence but him. When Jamie came back, and he saw how disappointed he was to have lost his bride, and how sorry Jenny was that she had married, he felt that he had done them both a great wrong, and that the best thing for him to do was to die ; and so he was dying.

He asked for Jamie, and when the young sailor came he took his hand and put it into Jenny's, and said, " You love each other well. Forgive me ; and, O ! let me do some good before I die. I give you, young man, all my houses, and lands, and cattle, and the dear wife who never ought to have been mine."

Then Jamie and Jenny bent down, and kissed his hands, and wept over them. Those hands grew cold against their lips. They looked up, and saw a sweet smile on their friend's face ; but that face was still and very white. — Old Robin Gray was dead.

After a while, Jamie and Jenny were

married, and were very happy, in a new and comfortable home. The old folks lived to see a little grandson — a “wee bit bairn,” as Jenny called him — toddling about the house, and hanging around them, as they sat in their cosy arm-chairs, by the fire-side. And this is the last we have heard about that family ; but I doubt not they always spoke tenderly of the old man that was gone, and I think it very likely they named that “wee bit bairn” Robin.

FRIDOLIN; OR, THE MESSAGE TO THE FORGE.

HUNDREDS of years ago, there lived, somewhere in Germany, in a great castle, surrounded by vast estates, a mighty lord, called the Count Von Savern. It was in a time when the wise and beneficent laws which now secure justice and protection to the very poorest people were not even dreamt of; — when the great lords and barons held unlimited power over their attendants, peasants, and serfs, — the power to punish, torture, or put them to death, at will.

Besides his large domains, his villages, his castle, and his mighty name, the Count Von Savern possessed a young and lovely wife, who, with her many gentle virtues, and tender graces, gave a nobler nobility to his sounding titles than she received from them.

Among the attendants of this fair and beauteous lady was a young page, named Fridolin, who was noted as well for his gentleness and piety as for his delicate, graceful beauty. Early and late — from dawn of day till the bell tolled for vespers — Fridolin's constant thought and care were his duties to his mistress ; — her every wish was fulfilled, almost before she could speak it. So watchful and unceasing was his devotion to her service that she would often gently chide him, and bid him not weary himself with such constant toil for her. Then his beautiful, soft eyes would fill with tears, and he would answer, pleadingly, “ What I do for one so dear to me does not seem like toil ; ” at which the lady would smile, a sweet, half-motherly smile ; for he was to her more like a gentle, loving child, than a servant.

And so, out of all her many attendants, the countess always selected Fridolin to execute her commands, and her lips were ever ready to speak his praise ; while he

strove, day by day, more and more eagerly in her service, wishing for no reward but the kindly smile, which he never failed to receive ; until his beautiful, radiant presence grew to be one of the pleasant accompaniments of her life, and she missed it, when absent, as she missed the sunshine from her chamber, when the day clouded.

Among the attendants of the Count Von Savern was a huntsman, named Robert, a dark, jealous, treacherous man. Robert had long noticed, with envious eyes, how Fridolin's comely face, and dutiful, willing heart, were winning him the generous favor and kindly preference of the countess ; and he determined to bring about the ruin and death of the beautiful, innocent youth, for no other reason than because he *was* beautiful and innocent.

One day, as the huntsman was returning, with his master, from the chase, he said, in a crafty, stealthy way, "Truly, thine is a happy lot, my lord. No jealous doubts disturb the quiet of thy sleep. En-

circled by her holy virtues, thy noble lady stands secure in faith and truth."

The Count Von Savern had a generous, noble heart, but he had, also, a most passionate temper ; and when this was roused it was not difficult, as the cunning Robert well knew, to blind his better judgment, and lead him on to savage, cruel deeds. At Robert's soft, insinuating words, he wheeled his horse fiercely round, and, with flashing eyes and frowning brow, exclaimed, "How now, bold man ! What is this thou sayest ? Think'st thou I rest my faith on aught so fickle as a woman's truth, — woman, whose ear is ever open to the smooth voice of flattery ? Not I. — I build on firmer ground. — My august name and lordly might are the buckler of my lady's virtue and my own honor."

"Right !" said Robert ; "and thy noble scorn is punishment enough for one who, though born a vassal, yet holds himself so loftily that he dares aspire even to the lady whom he serves."

“How!” cried the count, trembling with a terrible anger; “dost thou speak of one that now lives, and dares this thing?”

“Can it be,” said the wily Robert, “that that which is so clear to all thy house is yet unknown to thee? If so, let me not be the one to undeceive thee.”

At this, the passion of the count burst all bounds. “Fool!” he cried; “fool! thy words have decreed a death! Give me to know who dares so wild a crime as this!”

“My lord, I speak of Fridolin,” said the black-hearted knave; adding, with subtle art, “truly his face is comely to behold.”

Count Von Savern started, as if a sword had pierced him; his face grew red and pale by turns, and his breath fairly hissed through his set teeth. Robert’s heart swelled with a malignant joy, as he noted how well his scheme was working; but, not yet content with his work, he said,

“Surely my gracious master must see that it is only in her presence the youth lives. When she is absent so are his thoughts, — so is almost his very self. At your board he stands heedless of duty, — spell-bound beside her chair, his eyes feeding his heart with this most unholy passion. And then, the rhymes he writ! In them stood bold confessed his most audacious love. Ay, nor that alone; the shameless knave begged that she might love him in return. All this the countess, filled with tender pity for his youth, and hoping each day, I doubt not, to find this unhappy passion flown of itself, has withheld from you. I fear me she did only right, in this, and that I have overdone my duty in departing from her gentle example.”

Not a word said the count; but, with his black brows knotted in terrible resolve, he struck the spurs into his good horse, and galloped fiercely away to the woods, where lay the iron-furnaces, which formed a part of his possessions.

Here, night and day, the great bearded smiths fed the vast furnaces with huge masses of iron, until they boiled and surged like fiery seas, while mighty hammers joined their ponderous clang to the roar of monster bellows, and, above all, the chimneys, steeple-high, shot solid columns of red fire into the very heavens.

The Count Von Savern checked his panting horse at the threshold, and, beckoning forth two swarthy, herculean smiths, he said to them, in cold, slow, deadly words, "Soon I shall send a messenger to you, who will ask, *Have you obeyed my lord's command?* Seize the wretch, and thrust him into yon hell-fire, that his very bones may scatter to the winds. Let him never offend my sight again."

Those brawny monsters needed no second command. They rubbed their hands, in savage glee, and their inhuman breasts swelled with joy, at the prospect of this cruel deed. No gentle, humane instincts had ever quickened in their brutish na-

tures, — no tender flowers of pity had ever bloomed in their rude hearts. With the cold-blooded zeal of pagan priests, at some infernal sacrifice, they hastened back to the furnace, and plied the great bellows, to make more hot the dreadful fires.

In the mean time, the count, hastening back to the castle, sent the wicked huntsman to summon Fridolin to receive his message. When the gentle boy appeared, not daring to trust himself to many words, lest he should betray his horrid purpose, the count said, briefly, “Hasten to the forge, in the woods, and say to the smiths, *Have you obeyed my lord’s command?*”

“It shall be done,” said Fridolin, as he bowed himself out of the hall. Then, thinking that his beloved mistress might have some service which he could do by the way, he hastened to her presence. He found her in the nursery, bending anxiously over the cradle of her beautiful child. “My lord bids me seek the forge, with a message for the smiths,” he said;



Fridolin the Faithful.

“but ere I go, hast thou no command to lay upon the willing heart of thy servant?”

The gentle countess smiled her thanks, for his tireless thought of her, and said, in a voice that was soft and sweet as the flowing of summer streams, “I had wished to hear the holy mass, this morn, that I might pray for my little babe, who is far from well. But do thou seek the shrine, and let thy fervent prayer take the place of mine. As thou shalt free thine own soul from the taint of sinful thought, so will it find grace to win God’s mercy for mine, and for the gentle body of my child.”

The fair lady could have asked no more welcome service of Fridolin. With quick and happy feet, he sped along the path, through the cool, solemn woods, where the singing of birds made a sunshine for the ear; — over the winding stream, in whose clear deeps other woods seemed to lie — fairy woods, with softer shadows and fairer

lights ; — by the marge of lovely meadows, whose tender green was touched into a beautiful, golden bronze, by the free, mid-summer bounty of the sun. On went the gentle youth, his joyous nature thrilling with a silent, involuntary response to all these sights and sounds, through which God's great love is ever yearning to his children. On he went, till the peaceful little village came in sight, its quaint, speckled cottages huddled like eggs in the nest-like valley, while over all brooded the dome of mother-church.

Fridolin had thought to do his master's bidding first, and was speeding past the village, when suddenly, from the church-tower, there drifted the peal of the bell, calling to the service of the Holy Sacrament. Saying to himself, in pious thoughtfulness, "If God is found upon the way thou must not pass him by," he turned back, and entered the church to pray.

The harvest season was just then at its height, and so busy with scythe and sickle

were the villagers, gathering God's bounty from the fields, that they neglected the call of the bell to gather the harvest of his mercy, from the lesson of our Saviour's sacrifice. So Fridolin found the church almost empty, with not a single chorister to serve the mass* or share the rites. Seeing this, he felt a holy impulse to serve as sacristan himself, thinking that that which promoted the cause of Heaven could not be a delay.

With meek and humble bearing, he passed into the chancel, robing the priest in "cingulum" and "stole," and nimbly arranging all the holy vessels required for the high mass. When this portion of the service was over, urged by a pious zeal, he still remained, to act as ministrant, — bowing before the altar, with the mass-book in his hands, — kneeling right and left, watchful of every sign, and tinkling the little bell three times as the "*sanc-*

* At this time, the Roman Catholic was almost the only form of the Christian religion in existence.

tus” fell from the lips of the priest. Then, as the meek priest bends low before the altar, lifting on high the sacred cross, again the silver tinkle of his bell is heard, while all present, kneeling down, mark their breasts with the sign. And so, through all the service, did he assist the rites with knowing and ready hand ; for all the customs of that holy place were set down in his earnest heart. Then, when the service closed with the blessing, and he had reverently put away all the consecrated chalices and sacred symbols, and sprinkled the shrine with holy water, he once more took his way to the forge, murmuring slowly to himself twelve *pater-nosters*.

When he reached the forge, he found the two smiths standing beside one of the furnaces, with a horrid expression of exultation on their coarse faces. “How fares it, my friends?” said Fridolin. “*Have ye obeyed my lord’s command ?*”

At this question, the smiths both burst

into a laugh that made Fridolin's blood run cold ; so ghastly and terrible was it. Then, pointing into the yawning, fiery throat of the furnace, they said, "Go thy ways, lad. He's caught and cared for ; and thy lord shall give us good praise, we warrant thee."

Back went Fridolin to the castle, striving, with fleet foot, to recover the time spent in the church. When he entered the great hall, the count started back, as though one from the dead had appeared to him. He could hardly believe his eyes ; but, quickly recovering himself, he said, with a frown, "Whence comest thou, boy?"

"From the forge," said Fridolin, wondering to himself at the count's strange manner.

"So !" said the count ; "and nowhere else ? By my troth, thy legs are but slow transports, for their age. How comes it thou hast loitered thus ?"

"My lord," replied Fridolin, "I de-

layed no longer than to fulfill a command my lady, the countess, had charged me with ; for, pardon me, on quitting thy presence I sought her's, to ask if there was aught I could do for her by the way. She bade me seek the church, and hear the mass for her. No command, even from her gracious lips, could be more sweet to me. So, as I passed the village by, the bell, loud ringing from the tower, seemed like the echo of my lady's wish ; and I turned aside to pray, beseeching the good Saviour for long life, and health, and joy to my lord and lady both, and also to your precious babe, for whom the countess most did wish my prayers."

Softened, in spite of himself, by the earnest sweetness of Fridolin's speech and manner, and still wondering how the youth could have escaped the dreadful fate he had prepared for him, the count asked, "And when thou did'st reach the forge, what answer made the smiths?"

"They pointed into the fierce furnace,

and said to me, with a ghastly, terrible laugh, 'Go thy way. He's caught and cared for; and thy lord shall give us good praise.' "

"And Robert?" gasped the count, as an awful suspicion flashed across his mind; "thou must surely have crossed his path! *I sent him to the wood.*"

"Neither in wood nor meadow, my lord," said Fridolin, "have I seen any trace of him."

The count stood, pale and death-like, for a moment; then, lifting up his hands, he said, solemnly, "O, God of heaven! thou, in thy surpassing wisdom, hath judged the right."

Then, with his fierce pride all gone, meekly and gently he took the hand of Fridolin, and, leading him into the chamber of the countess, said, as the lovely lady looked up, in silent wonder, "No angel is more pure than this dear child! Long may thy love for him continue." Then, lifting his plumed cap from his head, he

raised his face heavenward, and added, reverently, "How weak is our poor human strength!—how dim our mortal sight! God and his host keep watch over Fridolin."

Lest some of the younger readers of this story should not perfectly understand what became of the huntsman, Robert, or how it was that the smiths did not thrust Fridolin into the furnace, as the count had intended, I will explain it a little more clearly than the ballad does.

While Fridolin was fulfilling the duties of sacristan, in the church, Robert grew so impatient to learn the success of his wicked plot that he went to the furnace himself. He arrived there before Fridolin had quitted the church, and when he asked the smiths if they had done what his lord had commanded them to do, the words were so nearly like those the count had used that they supposed *he* must be their victim; so they at once seized him, and,

in spite of his cries, and fierce struggles, and efforts to explain, pitched him head-long into the terrible fire, which he had intended should destroy the innocent Fridolin.

